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**THE NEW NEW GUINEA**





# THE NEW NEW GUINÉA

BY  
BEATRICE GRIMSHAW

AUTHOR OF  
"IN THE STRANGE SOUTH SEAS"  
"FROM FIJI TO THE CANNIBAL ISLANDS"  
ETC.

WITH FORTY-NINE ILLUSTRATIONS  
AND A MAP

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British New Guinea .

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# THE NEW NEW GUINEA

## CHAPTER I

What is Papua?—The tropical martyr—How not to see Queensland  
—Bêche-de-mer—The inevitable “B.P.”—The history of Papua  
—Port Moresby.

LIKE everybody else, I thought New Guinea belonged to England; that it was a most ungettable place; that it was inhabited almost solely by the fiercest cannibals in the world; that it was so unhealthy as to be called the “White Man’s Grave,” and that there was nothing worth having there except Birds of Paradise.

Even after spending some months in the New Hebrides, which are not many hundred miles removed from the great island continent of Papua, I did not know much more about New Guinea than I had known in my schoolroom days at home. The countries of the Pacific world are separated from each other with a completeness undreamed of in Europe. The New Hebrides know nothing of New Guinea. The Fijis are ignorant of the New Hebrides. The great central groups—Cook Islands, Tonga, Samoa—tell fairy tales of Fiji, and believe the

Solomons to be something like the end of the world. If you want to get from one to the other, there is only one way as a rule—take ship (when you can get it) to Sydney, or possibly to Auckland and thence to Sydney, a little round of a couple of thousand miles or so—then, from Sydney, take ship again (if there is one to be had) for the group you wish to visit. It is quite possible you may have to travel four or five thousand miles, and spend two or three months in traversing a distance that is only eight or nine hundred as the crow flies. That is the joke of Pacific travel. It is well for you if you can see the humour of it.

Of course, I had heard tales of New Guinea in the "Islands." There was a trader in Niue—may he see this, and be ashamed!—who recounted to me some of his amazing experiences up the Fly River. "I was purser of a passenger steamer on the river," he said, "and I assure you it was really painful to see some of the passengers we took up. There's gold in the Fly, you know—it's found sticking among the roots of the mangroves, in those deadly river swamps—and prospecting parties go out to get it. We used to find the remnants of them later on, yellow-faced skeletons staggering out of the swamps and waving a quinine bottle full of gold dust at us, to get a passage anywhere away from the place. We took up one party of fourteen, and afterwards brought back three—all that were left."

A striking anecdote, well told. . . . Four years

later, when I had been up some of the great New Guinea rivers, had seen a good deal of the country, and realised in what stage of civilisation it stood, the tale appeared more striking yet. If there are passenger steamers running on the Fly in twenty years' time from now, the Government will consider itself fortunate. If there is ever any gold found on the river, it will consider itself more fortunate still. And if the gold so far departs from all known geological and metallurgical laws as to be found conveniently sticking in the roots of the trees that stand in deep water and are daily washed by strong tides, the whole country will no doubt make pilgrimages to the shrines of the Blessed D'Albertis and Saint William Macgregor to offer up thanks for a special miracle.

What really drew my attention to New Guinea as a place where people did go and did live was (paradoxically enough) a death—the suicide in 1904 of the Chief Judicial Officer, who was temporarily in charge of the country. The tale of that wretched and unnecessary disaster will be told in another place. Its effect upon the country at large (strange to say) was not exactly disastrous. All over the world flashed the startling news that the "Governor of British New Guinea" had committed suicide—had shot himself dead in front of Government House, at the foot of the flagstaff that carried his country's flag. Such a sensational incident was bound to attract attention to the colony, and it did. To the ordinary citizen it did not cast any discredit on Papua—people com-

mitted suicide everywhere—for various reasons ; but it made him wonder where and what British New Guinea was, and occasionally induced him to look it up in a library. The seed thus sown bore fruit later on in assisting settlement.

Like the other ignorant persons, I went to a library and began to read up New Guinea. I found out some astonishing things. First of all, England did not own the country. Holland had a liberal half of it, and Germany a quarter. Our share looked very small till one began to compare it scale for scale with European countries, and it then appeared, amazingly enough, to be twice as big as England.

The scenery was said to be very fine, and the bird and insect life wonderful. For the rest, the books told of cannibals and crocodiles, fevers and snakes and swamps, unexplored rivers, unknown mountains. It sounded interesting, but calculated to give the unescorted woman wanderer food for rather serious thought.

Still—how can one put it without offending a number of excellent writers and worthy travellers?—still, I was conscious of a doubt somewhere, like the lady in *Hard Times* who could not exactly say she had a pain, but thought there was a pain somewhere in the room. I did not think the writers lied. But I had been to various queer places on the surface of earth and sea, and never found them just what they were represented to be. It was clear that New Guinea could not be worse than it was made out.

## . THE ROUTES TO NEW GUINEA 5

It was equally plain, therefore, that it might be better.

Not until November, 1907, did I get a chance of finding out for myself. At that time, other engagements being cleared away, and much talk about British New Guinea being in the air, after its recent transfer to Australian government under the title of "The Territory of Papua," I somehow found myself saying good-bye to friends who evidently regarded the occasion as the next thing to a funeral on board an A.U.S.N. steamer at an obscure Sydney wharf—luggage labelled "Port Moresby."

And thereafter came ten days of pure happiness.

The routes to New Guinea are not nearly so long or so out of the way as one supposes, looking at the isolated position of the country. After you end your luxurious P. and O. voyage of five weeks from Marseilles, you may be in Port Moresby in ten days if you go through with the mails, taking train part of the way. If you go by A.U.S.N. and Burns Philp boat, you will be there in a fortnight, travelling along the coast of Queensland. If you take the Burns Philp through steamer by the Solomon Islands, you will be three weeks on the road. Each route, in its way, is fascinatingly interesting, but perhaps the best for the absolute "new chum" is the Queensland coast way, as it allows the seven times wonderful land of Papua to produce its full impression, undimmed by the strange sights and experiences met with travelling through the Solomons.

The cut of a sleeve or a skirt, the fastening of a tie, changes not more surely with the years than does the cut of a prevailing emotion. In Goldsmith's day the traveller was of necessity more or less an exile. He might—no doubt he frequently did—enjoy himself extremely, and much prefer foreign countries to his native land. But it was not the fashion to speak or to feel after such a cosmopolitan style, and the eighteenth-century wanderer was inexorably constrained to sing his wanderings in a minor key.

His grandson, in the early days of railways, was content to regard the continent of Europe as an entirely delightful playground. Tropical climates, however, were his especial terror. African explorers who suffered unheard-of things from sunstroke and wild beasts—Indian officials who became “nabobs” and acquired diseased livers, both in accordance with some mysterious law of nature—represented to him the only connection with the torrid zones that was known or possible. Nobody went to the lands of monsoons and man-eaters for pleasure, and only the most amazing discoveries or the biggest possible fortunes could compensate anyone for the hardships that must of necessity be faced.

It must be confessed that this idea dies hard, and though moribund, is not yet ready for its coffin. People in general will allow that there is pleasure in seeing the wonderful East and the amazing South—that one may indeed live near the Line for a few

years, if compelled to do so—but the convention of hardship and horror still lingers. There is something dreadful about the tropics. The heat is a ceaseless torture. The wild beasts and reptiles are a constant danger. The natives are always ready to murder you. The gorgeous scenery may be all very well, much as a painted belle in a ballroom is good to look at ; but one would give a thousand miles of the one, or the other's whole battery of charms, for a simple green English lane with a primrose in it, or a smile from an innocent country lass. . . .

Which is all very pretty, and calculated to draw approving murmurs from the gallery. But it does not happen to be true. A good many men, if put on oath, would be obliged to acknowledge that they find the society of the finished belle more amusing than the bread-and-milk conversation of the provincial young woman. A good many people who keep putting off the purchase of that saloon single, outside, amidships ticket that will open the gate of the country lane and silence the whisper of the starlight-silvered palms for ever, would have to tell you, were they sworn to truth, that the tropic world is almost wickedly fascinating, and that they fear they will feel a little out of place—just at first, of course—when they go home to stay. . . . But then what becomes of the heroism, the wonder, the distinction, of living in the lands that to “most people” are only a geographical expression for something perilous and unpleasant ?



No, it is time that somebody really told the truth about these wicked tropics ; that the augurs who have resided in Calcutta or Colombo, Townsville, Cooktown, or Fiji, Buenos Ayres, Barbados, or Singapore, should cease to wink at one another when they meet in London drawing-rooms and hear each other relating frightful tales of suffering and deprivation. . . . Here, on the big comfortable Australian steamer, with warmer and warmer breezes blowing in upon the dainty sea-blue curtains and cushions and cool white enamelled panelling, every day—with a keener, more crystalline sun dancing each morning on the waveless sea that lies inside the Great Barrier Reef—with clean white clothes coming out all over the ship, and passengers' mattresses mysteriously appearing like night-blooming flowers upon the promenade decks when the moon gets up—with a sense of lazy ease and hurry-no-man's cattle drifting down on each of us like a blessing sent by Marconigraph from the gods of Cancer and Capricorn—here, going north and north and north along immense Australia, to the countries of the crocodile and the palm once more, the passengers look like nothing in the world less than martyrs.

One must confess that it is more or less the fashion to complain of one's lot, even among these contented-looking beings. It seems that there is a famine of theatres, music-halls, and races in the hot countries ; that you have to do your shopping by steamer, and only get your newspapers at intervals. You

## THE WAY TO SEE QUEENSLAND 9

see too much of the same small set of people. There is not enough of variety in the food. The mosquitoes are troublesome. . . . It is exactly the same tone of complaint, somewhat varied in the arrangement of the notes, that one has heard in London, in America, in every corner of the earth where necessity compels men to earn their bread under conditions short of Paradise. . . . One seems to remember, too, that the catering and the amusements did not satisfy, even in the original garden.

All the same, the passengers are quite evidently "going back to Dixie," and not sorry to go.

The way to see Queensland—if you are not going to see it—is to travel up the coast on an A.U.S.N. boat, bound for Papua. No qualms of conscience as to mines unvisited, rising pastoral districts unseen, brand-new town-halls unadmired, beset the steamer traveller who has no intention of doing Australia's second largest and most interesting State otherwise than by lazily looking on as he is carried past. Like Harold Skimpole, who could lie on the rug before a good fire, imaginatively travelling up an African river, and "seeing the wonderful forms of the foliage just as clearly as if he were really there," we lie in our deck chairs day after day, absorbing iced drinks and novels, imagining the mines and the herds of cattle, and looking up now and then to note a new stretch of exquisite heliotrope-coloured hills, rising away in the distance behind a coast of creamy gold, or to see a fresh archipelago of little bright green islets rising

out of a sea that is rich blue without the reef, warm aquamarine within. And still the endless coast goes on. And still, day by day, we come to baking little towns with verandahed tin-roofed stores and houses, and great hotels that are evidently the resort of thousands of square miles of townless country. And we stop to take up cargo or passengers, to bring all the latest news and mails, and to give the people a change (strange reversal of the eager rush for news and diversion from ship to shore, in the busy ports of the Old World!). And each of the towns is *the* rising town of Queensland, though all look like one another.

But at Rockhampton, if my memory does not lie (perhaps it does—I was not seeing Queensland), the first of the palms is met with, a mere handful of dusty and unhappy featherbrooms: still, a landmark of importance. And at Cairns you get out and go to the hotel for a night, and do not go to see the Barron Falls, and feel all the pleasure of one who boldly and shamelessly sins, without the guilt. But you walk about the town, and think that there is nothing in it so interesting as the stuffed blue-helmeted cassowary in a back-street shop-window. . . . Somehow, until now, you had not realised that there were actual cassowaries anywhere except upon the plains of Timbuctoo; it is astonishing to know that in Papua, where you are going, there are plenty of them, and to see for yourself that they look quite tall enough to eat any member of the L.M.S. or the Methodist Mission

who might happen to incur their displeasure—not forgetting the “hymn-book too.”

Bêche-de-mer cutters and schooners abound on the Great Barrier Reef, and we see them almost every day. The bêche-de-mer has long been known as a dainty to the Chinese, than whom there are no finer cooks in the world, but it is only of late years that Europeans are beginning to realise they have missed something in dismissing this hideous sea slug as uneatable. Once taste bêche-de-mer soup in a Queensland hotel or private house where they know how to make it, and you will never say thank-you for turtle again.

There are many kinds of bêche-de-mer, varying in size, in colour, and in value. About thirty pounds a ton (dried) is the price of the worst grades. The better grades sometimes rise as high as two hundred. The process of collecting is simplicity itself. The slugs live in the shallow water of the coral reefs, and are picked up by the native employees of the boat-owners without any trouble of hunting or catching. They are boiled, cleaned, smoked for twenty-four hours, and then sold to the large exporting dealers at so much per ton. On the enormous stretches of the great Barrier Reef the supply is practically limitless, and a good deal of money is made by lucky traders. I heard a tale at Cairns of two Sydney clerks who got tired of their work, and being smart boatmen, as nearly all Sydney young men are, ran a cheap cutter that they had bought right up the

Australian coast to the reef. A few black "boys" were engaged at a trifling wage, a curing hut put up on an uninhabited island, and in a few months the two enterprising tape-measurers had made several hundred pounds. . . . Does not the heart of the English clerk wax faint with envy for the opportunities of his Australian brother? If any couple of Mr. Peter Robinson's young men could only go away and make a little fortune in the summer holidays, catching and drying bloaters off the Yarmouth coast, how many young men learned in "the" ribbons, and tactful with "the" haberdashery, would Mr. Peter Robinson have? Just as many as Mr. Farmer or Mr. Hordern of Sydney, no doubt. He that will to Cupar, maun to Cupar : the man who was cut out by nature for a manly life will find it, if it lies in Yarmouth or Yucatan, while the man whom an all-wise Providence has intended for the safe and the gentle life, will not stray beyond the limits of his fourpenny tram for all the songs of all the sirens in the seven seas of the world.

We came into Cooktown, which is very far away indeed, and a long distance past the railway world, in ten days after leaving Sydney. I have not forgotten to tell about Brisbane, which I saw and loved, and went back to by and by, but have deliberately left it out, because it is dangerous to begin talking seriously about anything in Queensland if one does not want to be led into writing a book about it. Queensland is so—

I said I would not—but it really is most—well, go and see something of it for yourself, even if you can only visit Brisbane, which in itself is . . . Please change the subject.

We came into Cooktown, as I said, and disembarked, for the coastal steamer goes no further, and one must here take one of the boats of the wild and wicked Burns Philp Line to make one's way on to Papua. I do not mean to cast any aspersions upon the spotless reputation of this excellent, pawky, pious Scotch-Australian shipping firm, nor upon the behaviour of anyone who lives upon, or travels by, its ancient but hardy vessels. One instinctively calls them wild and wicked, however, as one used to call the plains of Western America wild and woolly, because of the prevailing character of the surroundings of the line. B.P.'s boats go nowhere that is settled, nowhere that is civilised, nowhere devoid of the local colour furnished by the gentle cannibal (he really is gentle), and the modest head-hunter, and the coy crocodile. Their captains and officers have one and all lived lives of adventure that would make the most lurid of blue-and-yellow twopenny dreadfuls on a cheap tobacconist's counter read like a kindergarten baby prize. Because of this, they are very quiet and rather blasé people as a rule, not intensely interested in anything, and usually ambitious of growing beans for Sydney market gardens, or living in a bungalow up the Hawkesbury River, and taking in boarders when—or if—they get old.

The firm are keen traders, and the ships generally go out of port staggering with cargo. It is all prosaic enough to "B.P.'s" own people no doubt, but travellers from far countries cannot help having an idea that there is something quite romantic in making your money out of pearl-shell and pearls and sandalwood and cedar, even out of *bêche-de-mer* and cocoanuts—not to mention ivorynuts, tortoise-shell, dried fungus, and half a score other odd products about which most people know nothing. There is always vivid local colour on a "B.P." boat, quite apart from the extraordinary places into which she is sure to take you. She will have native boats' crews—half-tamed savages who dress in a rag and a dozen necklaces, and do war-dances on the after-deck in the moonlight ; there will be yam and turtle and other strange foods among the dishes at the ordinary saloon meals ; you are almost sure to have an explorer among the passengers and a gold prospector or two, and a queer, dead-silent or devastatingly talkative trader from the back of nowhere, who has been half-eaten by sharks, crocodiles, or natives at least a dozen times, and who has been so long restricted to the three classes of society above mentioned, that he has almost lost taste for any other. And as you near the New Guinea coast . . .

But how careless to have left out Cooktown ! Where Captain Cook once made a call, eventually to be commemorated by a statue that got as far as the pedestal many years ago, and seems likely to stop

there—where there is a large street, and two rows of shops, and several hotels that introduce you to the unpleasing Australian custom of penning guests in scores of iron tanks or cubicles, all under one hot iron roof—where the mango trees grow in a splendid double avenue all down the street as big as English beeches, and hang out tantalising green ovoid fruits that will be ripe in just a few days—after we have sailed ; where you can go driving in the dust, and see many low mountains covered with grey-green eucalyptus, and many immense anthills, fifteen feet high and more, just like the pictures in the geography books. . . . Well, one cannot go back, and it is two days since we left Cooktown now, and we must all get up early to-morrow morning, for at daylight we shall be in sight of New Guinea.

The “new chums” are very busy absorbing information, this last evening, and, like most travellers, they know a good deal more of local history by this time than the residents of the place. We have been looking things up on the A.U.S.N. steamer, more or less, but the extraordinary prevalence of the alligator story along the whole Queensland coast leaves little room for general reading or conversation. As every traveller knows, the shark story dominates most tropic liners ; the alligator story is certainly a welcome change, but neither the one nor the other satisfies the hunger we feel for minute information about the country we are going to see.



As the *Makambo* ploughs along to-night over a calm, dark, hot sea, with thunder somewhere very near us, and phosphorescent gleams twinkling about the bows, one of the voyagers, at all events, seated in a quiet corner of the deck, is thinking seriously enough about this strange island-continent lying unseen upon our beam, and wondering how it is that in these days of universal exploration, when the secrets of South America are almost all told, and even Central Africa and Central Asia have little more to give, New Guinea should still flaunt defiance in the face of all research. There have been numberless exploring parties, but not one has done all that it set out to do, though each has added a little to our knowledge of the interior. Not a single one of the great rivers has been traced to its source. Most of the high mountains have not been ascended. No one knows what lies in the great blank spaces of the Western Division of Papua. In fact, the greater part of the country is a riddle still unread. . . . Why?

I leave the reason to disclose itself later on, and return to the information that I have been collecting out of various books owned by passengers and officials.

New Guinea, these tell me, was discovered in 1511 by Antonio de Abrea. The great archipelagoes of islands lying to the south and east were not discovered until the end of the eighteenth century, by D'Entrecasteaux and other French navigators. It is amazing, but true, that the whole eastern end of the

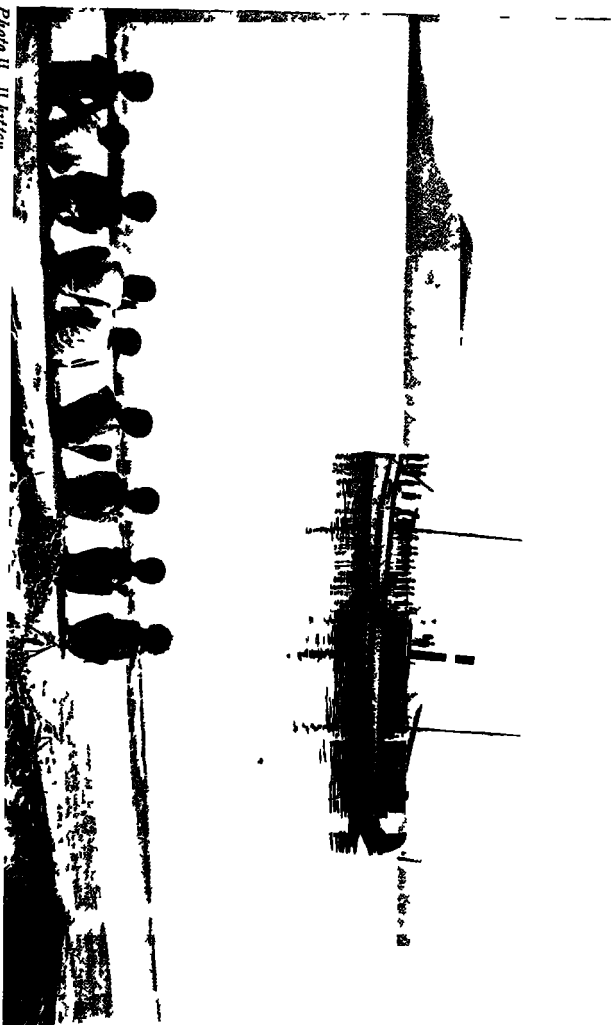


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PAPUAN COMPLAIN SHI VII K

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country remained unmapped and unknown, no one being able to say where the great "tail" of New Guinea came to an end until so late as 1873, when a British man-of-war charted it out.

England, in the person of her more enlightened statesmen and commanders, made no less than three attempts to secure a footing in New Guinea. In 1793 the whole country was annexed by officers of the East India Company, and an island in Geelvink Bay was used as a residence for British troops. The Government of the day, however, refused to ratify this wise and far-seeing act. In 1873 Captain Moresby annexed some of the islands at the eastern end of the country. This too was disapproved, although by now the Dutch had been in possession of the whole western half of the country for generations. In 1883 a still more determined attempt to benefit the home country against its will was made by the late Sir Thomas M'Ilwraith, Premier of Queensland. This able statesman, alarmed by the rumour of German annexation, and rightly fearing to see a foreign Power established in a country not a hundred miles from the Australian coast, annexed the eastern half of the country, and asked in terms of the greatest urgency for a ratification of his action from the Home Government.

It was refused. Lord Derby, at that time Premier, was opposed to the idea of colonial expansion, and considered the Queensland Minister's fears of German aggression to be unfounded. He did not hesitate to

say so in a biting phrase that must have come back to his memory a year later, when Germany actually did take possession of a good half of the open territory and of the better part of the Solomon Islands. On this the British Government so far relented as to allow the "protection" of the remaining portion if the Australian Government would guarantee £15,000 a year towards expenses. Under this arrangement the country remained a dead weight upon the hands of all concerned for four years, after which it was annexed to the British Crown, and for seventeen years simply went to sleep. It is a little hurtful to one's national pride, but must in justice be admitted, that British administration of the country was not a success, and that the Australian Government, short as its time has been, has, on the contrary, been conspicuously successful.

Concerning various administrators who held the reins of British New Guinea between 1884 and 1906, it can only be said that one and all systematically, determinedly, and successfully resisted all attempts towards opening up and developing the country. I do not say this as a stranger to Papua—the truth had not even dawned on me that night when I sat on deck and conned over the few geographical facts that I had been able to gather. I say it after a residence of a year and a half in the country, after meeting almost every white person in it, seeing every division, and travelling into every part attainable without an exploring expedition—after seeing and talking to the

men who know the history of Papua, here and in Australia, and after reading for my own information a mass of papers, reports, and general literature dating back nearly thirty years.

This, then, is, or was, the reason of New Guinea's apparent uselessness and inaccessibility. Difficult though the country is to the traveller—seriously as development has been handicapped by hostile natives, local fevers, want of proper roads—not one, or not all, of these dead-weights has pressed down the balance half so far as the real clog and hindrance—the fact that Papua's rulers wished to keep the place shut up.

There are two sides to every question. Some of those who held the destiny of the country in their hands were moved in their exclusive policy by an honourable wish to secure the welfare of the native. It really seemed to them that this could best be done by keeping out the white man, except in so far as he was represented by missionaries. They feared that planters, miners, traders, would corrupt the simple Papuan, and that a rapid influx of white population would deprive the native of his lands and condemn him to slavery.

A frivolous little volume of Barry Pain's, published some year ago, contained a sentence that deserved wider quotation than it has received—

“Bear with me, dearest, for being no more than I am. Many people are no more than they are, and one has to put up with it.”

One must bear with even a well-meaning Colonial Administrator for being no more than he is. It was not the fault of these gentlemen—some of them honest and worthy men—that they were no more than they were—that they thought a valuable colony could and should be kept in the pocket of anyone; that they were so tender of the man-eaters' morals as to desire to keep them eternally unspotted from the contact of vile coffee planters; that, travelling through the known parts of the country, and even discovering many new districts, month by month, they should walk through the land with their eyes shut and not see millions upon millions of acres of splendid country lying waste and unclaimed; and that the possibility of guarding the natives from enslavement by means of laws never seems to have occurred to these curiously short-sighted law-givers.

It was not their fault, perhaps. Still, seeing what Australian methods and government have done for the country in less than four years after we had successfully spoiled it for over twenty, one cannot help regretting that British rule enjoyed quite so long a run.

But, as the early Victorian novelist used to say, after designedly giving away the chief interest of his plot, "I am anticipating," and must return to the *Makambo*.

It was a disappointment on rising at a comparatively early hour next morning to find the great peaks of the Owen Stanley Range invisible. An endless

pale blue coast, thin and unsubstantial in the heat, lay stretched out along our port beam. There were hills behind it, but a thick mantle of cloud covered them all. We could only imagine the splendid cone of Mount Yule, rising ten thousand feet straight into heaven, the gradual slopes and scarps of Mount Victoria's majestic thirteen thousand feet, the astonishing humps and domes of the smaller seven or eight thousand feet mountains nearer the coast. Here and there, as the steamer plodded steadily along the great equatorial island, one would catch just a glimpse of a whitey-blue summit, very far away and amazingly high up, or see the rise of some long range of foothills leading away and away . . . whither?

The nameless charm of Papua—the fascination which many have felt but none can express—first lays its compelling hand upon the traveller when he looks at such scenes as these, and knows for a certainty that his eyes are resting upon hills unprofaned by the white man's foot—upon lands where “no one has been”; upon rivers, known and navigated indeed in the lower reaches, but rising from mystery, and taking their growth in the unseen. The plantation country, with its busy hordes of labourers, its comfortable managers' bungalows, its loads of coffee and fibre and copra coming down to meet the steamers, takes on actual romance viewed against this background of the ever-fascinating unknown. Scarce a dainty arm-chaired verandah but looks out upon mountain ranges that



shut in unvisited mystery ; scarce a trader or miner but goes every now and then, in the course of his ordinary work, to the verge of the "Never Never," and sometimes even beyond ; hardly a creek supplying water to the horses and baths to the plantation house which does not carry in its heart secret on secret of the strange places whence it has come. Much exploration has been done of late, bit by bit, after a quiet, unadvertised fashion, by the Government officials of the outermost districts, by miners and prospectors, and by a few of the missionaries of the Sacred Heart, who have the true pioneering spirit. But so much remains quite unknown, that one may safely prophesy it will be very many years yet before Papua loses the greatest of its charms—mystery.

The continent, or island, of New Guinea is nearly 1500 miles long, its greatest width being 430 miles. Its entire area is estimated at 235,000 square miles. In spite of the huge piece claimed by the Dutch and the goodly section belonging to Germany, England has no reason to complain of her share, since it amounts to 90,540 square miles, nearly 88,000 of which are on the mainland, the rest being made up of islands. The British-owned section is in many ways superior to German New Guinea. It is long and narrow—800 miles from east to west, and from 200 to 50 in width, its coastline being proportionately very great—3664 miles.

It is easy to understand, from a glance at the map, that Papua must be much more readily accessible, and



*Photo W. Whitman.*

# CATTLE RAISED IN PAPUA

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less troublesome and expensive to open up, than either of the foreign-owned sections. This impression is carried out by the actual facts. Both Dutch and German New Guinea are less known, less developed, less effectively controlled than Papua. Our share is, indeed, more valuable in many ways. To mention one or two only—the mineral resources of the country are richer, the pearl fisheries are more valuable, and the great extent of seaboard offers perfect facilities for cultivating the cocoanut, which, in the form of “copra” or dried kernel, is one of the most important products of Australasia.

It must be confessed that the name—the new name—of the English-owned section is a little confusing. In our childish days we were taught to think of the largest island of the world as “Papua, or New Guinea.” It is indeed marked as such on most maps. But when the part known as British New Guinea was taken over by the Commonwealth Government in 1906 it became necessary to find a new name, and the country was rechristened “The Territory of Papua”—much as though a foreign Power were to take possession of Ulster or Connaught and insist on calling it “Ireland.” The result, of course, has been confusion outside of Australia. Few people at home know that “British New Guinea” no longer exists, and the term “Papua” means, to the English reader, either the whole country or (if it is qualified by the addition of “New Guinea”) some small obscure portion of which no one has ever heard. It certainly

does not mean the "British New Guinea" of which he has probably heard something from time to time.

This trouble will no doubt set itself right in a few years. There is at least one strong argument for the name adopted. If "Australian New Guinea"—an easy and obvious title—had been chosen, the colony would still have continued to suffer, as it has done in times past, for the sins of the Guinea Coast of Africa. There can be no doubt in the mind of anyone who has visited New Guinea that some such misalliance of name has always haunted the ideas of the general public, and given the island continent of the south an ill reputation that it never honestly deserved. New Guinea is not a health resort for invalids—no tropical colony is—but it never was "the White Man's Grave," or the "Land of the Lost," or any other of the unpleasant things it has been miscalled. Perhaps, at the price of even a good deal of inconvenience and confusion, the Commonwealth Government did well to cast overboard every relic of the bad old days, and make an entirely fresh beginning.

We round a green headland—we pass through the jaws of an encircling coral reef—and the *Makambo* is at anchor in Port Moresby Bay. This is the capital that lies before us. There are only two towns in Papua; you here behold the chief.

Well . . . it is not a collection of log huts or bark "humpys," but there is no mistaking the pioneering stage, and Port Moresby has clearly not

emerged from it yet. The curious, peaky, pale green and deep blue hills that surround the town in a phantasmagorical array, quite unlike any hills as one has known them in other countries, are bare of all houses save three or four Government offices and bungalows and the residence of the London Missionary Society. There are no roads to be seen (in reality there is one, and several foot-tracks, but they are hidden behind the hills). The town itself, clambering up and down one or two of the lesser hills, does not own more than a score or two of houses, most of them Government offices. All the buildings are of wood or iron, painted white, all the roofs of grey iron. The houses are surrounded with deep verandahs and perched on piles eight or nine feet high, so that they look like huge many-legged beetles out for a walk. This is not because the ground is marshy in the town, but because white ants, snakes, iguanas, and other local fauna are rather too fond of making their homes with the residents in wet weather if not discouraged in this manner. A new building is being put up on a square of cleared ground ; the carpenters have got as far as the laying of the piles, and the bare earth is dotted at regular intervals with some dozens of black wooden posts capped with shining zinc. . . . It is extraordinarily like a pin-cushion seen through a magnifying glass.

There are no paved or macadamised streets in the town. Grass alone covers the space between the houses—grass and bare red earth. There are three

long wooden piers, but the steamer discharges passengers and cargoes from boats. We land on the central pier, and, walking up the sharp slope into the town, are assailed by a rich odour that somehow, in the midst of all the heat and glare, seems to recall the scented, shaded coolness of drawing-rooms far removed across the seas of the world and the seas of Time. . . . Sandalwood, as I live! and there it is, piled up by the side of the track in a heap that looks like somebody's winter firing. Rough logs, big straggling roots, knotty branches—all as sweet as only sandalwood is sweet—the very dust and splinters might perfume a lady's wardrobe. We steal a little piece or two, and pocket it to make a pleasant smoke against mosquitoes later on. And now comes the question of finding quarters—often something of a difficulty. More fortunate than most, I was invited to stay with friends, and was thus enabled to see the wonders of Papua under the pleasantest circumstances.

How is Papua governed, and what changes have been made in its administrative system since the Commonwealth took over the country?

In past times British New Guinea was classified as a Crown Colony, the government being carried on by an Administrator, with the help of a small Legislative Council. The correspondence of the Administrator with the Secretary of State had to go by a somewhat roundabout route, first through the Governor of Queensland, and then on to England.

Five resident magistrates, each in charge of one of the five divisions of the country, assisted in keeping order. Sir William Macgregor, during his Administratorship, instituted a useful system of Armed Native Constabulary, of whom, in the Crown Colony days, there were about a hundred and fifty. The native village constables also date from this period.

At the present time Papua is ruled by a Lieutenant-Governor appointed by the Commonwealth Government. He is assisted by an Executive Council of four official members, and a Legislative Council of four official and three non-official. The title of "Administrator" has been preserved, with a change of meaning. It is now borne by the Government officer next in rank to the Lieutenant-Governor. This official is supposed to take charge of the colony in the absence or illness of the Lieutenant-Governor, and in case of the death of a Governor he would hold the position until a new appointment could be made. The arrangement is in the nature of an insurance, providing against the possibility of the country being left at any time without a responsible head. This, in a new and uncivilised colony like Papua, far removed from post or telegraph, is very necessary ; but the somewhat sinister suggestion which it conveys as to the perils of Papuan existence is a little out of date, the health conditions of the country having so greatly improved of recent years.

There are now eight divisions in the colony ad-



ministered by eight resident magistrates, with the help of eleven assistant resident magistrates and four patrol officers.

The Customs, Post Office, Lands, Mining, and Agricultural Departments have their quota of officials—a small one—in Port Moresby and Samarai. The colony, on the whole, is run at very small expense, and has a considerable balance of revenue over expenditure. Correspondence now goes direct to the Commonwealth Government offices in Melbourne. Appointments of officials are recommended by the Commonwealth, and made, if approved, by the Lieutenant-Governor.

There has been only one Australian Lieutenant-Governor so far—the present occupier of the position, His Excellency Judge Murray (John Hubert Plunket Murray). The officials next in rank, the Hon. Miles Staniforth Smith, Director of Agriculture, and the Hon. A. M. Campbell, Government Secretary, are respectively Australian and Scottish. The lesser officials belong to various countries, but are all of English-speaking nationality, with a preponderance of Australian.

The present Lieutenant-Governor has held the post since April, 1907, when he was appointed temporarily to the charge of the country—the appointment being made permanent in November, 1908.

His Excellency John Hubert Plunket Murray, and late Colonel of the New South Wales Irish Rifles, is a son of the late Sir Terence Aubrey Murray, at one

time President of the Legislative Council of New South Wales. He was educated at Oxford and on the Continent, and has had a notable career at the New South Wales Bar. He is Chief Judicial Officer for Papua, as well as Lieutenant-Governor. During the late Boer war he served with distinction in the New South Wales Mounted Infantry, and was honoured by the British Government with the rank of Major. Papua is a country that at times makes demands on the military capacity of its rulers, and the Lieutenant-Governor's experience of war has no doubt assisted largely in keeping peace among the tribes—a paradox with which no student of history will find fault.

The history of Papua, up to the last two years, is a tale of disaster and unsuccess. During 1907-8, and still more during the present year, a notable change has been taking place. Some such development had been prophesied and hoped for by a few far-seeing ones; but time seemed to bring it no nearer, and in the stormy years of 1904-6 the colony seemed to be steadily losing ground. It is scarcely possible to give any account of Papuan history, however brief, without referring to the incidents of this unhappy period, although little, naturally, can be said about occurrences with which living and well-known people have been intimately concerned.

Early in 1903 the country came temporarily under the care of Judge Robinson, Chief Justice of Papua, a member of a well-known Queensland family. Judge

Robinson was a man still in the thirties, of a sensitive, humane, and conscientious character—too sensitive and high strung, it may be, for the very difficult and trying task that had devolved upon him. Among other matters that weighed much upon his mind, after he had become responsible for the peace of the country, was the bad effect that, among the western tribes, had followed the murder of the missionaries Chalmers and Tompkins—an outrage that made a deep impression upon the whole religious world. The murder had taken place in 1901, and a year later the natives who had committed the crime—Goari-Bari islanders—still kept possession of the victims' skeletons, holding them as trophies of war, and defying the whites to regain possession of them. Nor had the actual murderers ever been caught, though punishment of a general nature had been inflicted on their villages.

Judge Robinson decided, therefore, to pay a visit to Goari-Bari, and see whether it might not be possible to bring away the murdered missionaries' remains. He went in the Government steam yacht *Merrie England*, and took a number of armed native constabulary with him. The natives of Goari-Bari, being assured that the mission was peaceful, came on board from their canoes, a flotilla of which had surrounded the ship on her arrival. Among the visitors to the ship one of the native constables declared that he saw the actual murderers of Chalmers and Tompkins. Judge Robinson ordered the arrest

of the men. Their capture was the signal for a general attack by the natives in the canoes, who began firing arrows into the ship. One man aimed an arrow at the Acting-Governor himself, and would probably have shot him had not a constable put a bullet through the archer before the arrow could fly. At this the fight became general. It seems clear that the armed police and the white men shot a number of the natives who were firing at the ship, but how many, and under what circumstances, was never exactly or satisfactorily explained. The natives were soon beaten off and retired to their village, while the *Merrie England* steamed away.

The wildest reports of what had happened at Goari-Bari soon became current throughout the Territory, and some of them spread southward. The Commonwealth Government ordered an inquiry into the whole matter. There is no reason to believe that Judge Robinson would have suffered by this, but he himself, isolated from his friends, involved in a mesh of local quarrels, and feeling the whole trouble with extreme acuteness, could not take a reasonable view of the situation. He did not await the result of the inquiry, but was found one morning lying at the foot of the flagstaff in front of Government House, with a half-loaded revolver in his hand, shot through the head.

The violent feelings caused by Judge Robinson's death did not tend to smooth down local differences, which were already active enough. After the Acting-

Governor's suicide the colony broke up into a series of mutually hostile and mutually distrustful factions.

A new Governor was appointed, but during his rule things went from bad to worse, and the official life of the country became a blaze of continual quarrels. The Commonwealth of Australia sent a special Commission up to Papua to inquire into the trouble of the colony, and for some months the members of the Commission were very fully occupied travelling from place to place and taking the evidence of officials, planters, traders, anyone who had anything to say about the matters under discussion.

The Governor went home to England on leave, and did not return when his time was up. Meanwhile, the Chief Justice of the colony, His Honour Judge Murray, was appointed Acting-Administrator, and afterwards confirmed in his appointment as Lieutenant-Governor.

Papua, under the rule of an Australian-born Governor, appointed by the Commonwealth Administration, now began to advance in a way little calculated to flatter the pride of the nation that had industriously made nothing of the country for nearly a quarter of a century. Between 1907 and 1909 it changed from a useless tract of savage country, where the natives were more than half out of hand, the whites almost at war, land scarcely obtainable, property insecure, to a habitable, peaceful, and flourishing colony. The change has been so rapid that hardly anyone outside of Australia even knows that it has



PORT MORESBY GIRLS

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taken place, and the British public, assuredly, does not yet realise that Papua of to-day is by no manner of means British New Guinea of yesterday, either in name or in nature.

Figures may (proverbially) be made to prove anything. But there cannot be much doubt as to what the following extract from the records of the Government proves :—

Total land purchased and leased in the Territory of Papua, from the annexation in 1884 up to 1906 . .	28,999 acres.
Total up to March, 1909 . .	319,853 „

So ends the tale of the bad old days in Papua.  
We return gladly to the happier present.



## CHAPTER II

The sea villages of Port Moresby—Motuan trading instinct—A visit to the Bird-cage Houses—The curse of Babel—How to catch a murderer—Village dancers—The cold country of New Guinea—A start for the Astrolabe—What is a swag?—In jail.

**I**T is impossible to take Papua seriously at first, nor indeed is it necessary. You cannot understand the country if you set about the task after too grave a fashion. You must remember, above all things, that when the steamer slips away round Paga Hill, she snaps the last link connecting you with things commonplace, accustomed, even probable. You are left in the Land of the Impossible, where the thing which is not happens every day, and, in the truest sense of the phrase, nothing arrives save the unexpected.

A walk through the native village which lies a couple of miles beyond the township is the recognised way of opening one's acquaintance with Papua. More or less under white influence for thirty years, in constant association with the white community for at least fifteen, the village (one would naturally expect) should be by this time civilised out of all interest. It is not, however. Apparently the people of the harbour and the bay swallowed all the civilisation they could digest a good many years ago, and there stopped.

They know the value of money to a certain extent, though most of them prefer tobacco to coin in small amounts, and do not seem to be able to understand that coppers, if collected, are worth the same as silver. They have a liking for shirts, singlets, dresses, cotton kilts, but only wear them for ostentation, and as a piece of show-off when going into the town. Otherwise they prefer to go clad in a waistcloth or a grass kilt, according to sex. They know a good deal of pigeon-English, work for hire as servants, labourers, store assistants, go to church or school off and on, and are on the best and most friendly terms with the white population. Yet they believe heartily in magic and sorcery, and in many instances practise it; their marriage customs are still those of the primitive savage, and all the hard work both in village and field is done by the women.

So it is, therefore, that the twin villages of Hanuabada and Elavara have lost nothing in their interest for the casual white visitor, although the antiquarian might find much to regret, and something to rejoice over, in the decay of native customs good and bad.

These sea villages of Papua are very numerous, and when one has visited many the sense of wonder is apt to wear off, though the sense of pleasure in their artistic beauty remains as an abiding delight. Still, the first view is one that is long remembered. The strange brown houses, with their high-pitched gables and deep verandahs, set up on a forest of seaworn piles, the rough sketch of a ladder in front of

each, fit indeed for the light movements of bare feet and slight naked bodies, but a very trap of destruction for booted climbers—the jolly-looking crowd of mop-headed men and women loafing on the platforms, almost naked, save for the swaying ballet-skirts of the girls and the masses of beads worn by men and women alike—the cool lapping of the water right underneath the houses, and the green gleam that flickers through the half-transparent floors, when we climb inside to look round—all have a quaint exotic charm of their own, and an absolute fitness with their surroundings, sure to mark the memory deeply. The “street” of Hanuabada is of white sand and gravel shaded by tall old palms that lean downward to the sea after the graceful fashion of their race, and make matchless pencillings of woven leaves and waving plumes across the pathways, when the sun is shining low among the black stilts of the houses, and the girls are going down to the spring with their round brown water-pots poised in the crook of their round brown arms, to get water for the evening meal.

It is a merry-looking village, this of Hanuabada. There are about two thousand people in it, and the number of small fat naked children climbing perilously up and down the ladders, or splashing under the houses, seems to suggest that there is no diminution of numbers to be feared in this branch, at least, of the “disappearing brown races.” These Papuans are of Motuan and Koitapuan race, a handsome and amiable

type. They were never great fighters, and they deny having been cannibals at any time. Like all the other inhabitants of sea-built villages, they adopted that form of building to protect themselves as far as possible against the attacks of the fiercer mountain tribes, who, until the coming of the white people, used to make constant raids upon the coast dwellers. The people of these villages originally lived a little way from the coast, and supported themselves by hunting and gardening. It is scarcely credible, yet true, that after a century or two of life literally in the sea, they have not yet "adapted themselves to their environment" so far as to make themselves into decent fishermen. Although the bay is swarming with excellent fish, and the canoes go out now and then in a perfunctory way, very little fish finds its way under the brown thatch roofs unless a crowd of Hula people, from a district some fifty miles down the coast, happens to be making a visit. Then plenty is to be had, for the Hula tribe belong to the sea from time immemorial, and they know how to feed themselves in the way most natural to sea-dwellers. What they do not know is how to make clay pots such as Hanuabada manufactures, and they are pleased to go home laden with these objects of use and beauty, in return for the fish that they have supplied.

The Hanuabada native, indeed, is a born trader. His women cannot make the grass "ramies" or skirts in which they love to array themselves, piling on one over the other until an effect resembling a crinoline

is attained. Kabadi, a district some forty miles away, makes these, and trades them to the Motuan and Koitapuan belles—always for pots. The sago that they love might be grown in any swampy ground near the village, but they do not grow it, preferring to send out a sort of Argosy every October, when the north-west trades are near setting in, to the western district, returning months later without the immense cargoes of pots that weighed down their “lakatois,” and bringing with them many tons of Gulf sago which they have bought with their crockery-ware. They also work occasionally in the town, and spend the money, in European fashion, on various luxuries that appeal to them—scent, print “ramies,” mosquito nets, blankets, beads, barley-sugar and bull’s-eyes, tobacco, knives, tools. They are a cheerful and pleasant people, ready to fraternise with the whites, and very ready to take advantage of any over-indulgence—fairly industrious, rather clever, and not distinguished by over-nice ideas on the subject of morality.

This afternoon, as we tramp through the village in a heat that seems to slap one’s face and crisp the very hair upon one’s head (nevertheless, no one minds it, since it is the custom of the whites to defy and despise the heat in this equatorial land), most of the men are away, for the wallaby-hunting season is on, and the grass on the hills about the bay is being burned to drive out the game, so that it can be hunted down with dogs and speared. There are plenty of women, however—old women, black, with wrinkled hippopotamus-

like skins and bald-shaven heads, sitting at the eternal toil of the pots, shaping the clay with fingers and stick, and burning it in the fire ; young married women coming home from the manioc and banana gardens, laden with nets full of roots and fruit ; unmarried girls, gay with bead necklaces and many-coloured ramies, their huge woolly heads bright with cocoanut and sandalwood oil, their tattooed faces and breasts further adorned with stripes of black soot and washing-blue, swaggering about in front of the houses with an eye on possible beaux. All these look at us without interest—they are quite tired of white visitors and their eternal cameras, and only want us to throw them a stick or two of tobacco and go. One elderly man, however, trots after us persistently, and begs us to come in and see his house. He makes a living showing it to people from the steamers, and is not minded to let a patron escape.

So we climb up the rickety ladder and enter the dim, cool brown room opening from the verandah. There is another room beyond that, and yet another beyond that again—each running further and further out over the cool green water that we can see sparkling between the rough split logs of the floor. The doorways furnish the only light, but no other is needed, when you do not read or write, and do all your net-making and other fine work, such as tattooing, carving out combs and shell ornaments, etc., on the verandah outside. The roof is of brown

thatch, the floor and walls exhibit the native idea of a plank—a slice cut from the outside of a tree and left in its primitive semicircular shape. There is no furniture, save for a stray box or so of the camphorwood variety, fitted with a lock that rings when the key is put in. I recognise this box as a very old friend, having found it in every prosperous native house that I have visited in the whole Pacific, from Tahiti eastwards. It seems to be the one link connecting all the brown races of the Southern Seas. Why Melanesian, Micronesian, Polynesian, and Papuan alike should be consumed by the same desire for yellow camphorwood boxes with locks that ring, is one of those matters that one prefers to leave to professed ethnologists—confident in the belief that they do not know any more about it than oneself, and are therefore sure to pronounce the problem unscientific, and let it alone.

There are a few mats in a corner—rudely plaited, and little or not at all ornamented. The Papuan is not much of a mat-maker, skilful as he is in work demanding much higher ability. There is a selection of the locally made fire-clay pots for cooking and storing water. The girls' spare ramies are piled in a heap on the floor; the men's hunting spears, made of hard wood like ebony, and all in one piece, are stacked together underneath an odd-looking object that hangs on the wall—something like the beginning of a piece of basketwork, or the frame of a rude shield. This, we hear, is a snare for wild pigs. When the hunter

has brought a wild boar to bay and the brute is about to charge, he holds the snare at arm's length to one side, and the animal attacks it furiously, plunging its head right into the middle, where there is an opening that seems to invite the action. Once in he cannot pull his head out again, and is so confused and crippled by the snare that the hunter can spear him with little danger. . . . One would like to know how many sportsmen there are at home who would stand still to the charge of a furious tusked boar, with nothing but a wooden spear and a wicker snare to protect them ?

The Impossibilities of Papua once more loom large in the path. These peaceable and timid Motuans are not all peaceable and timid, that is quite evident. . . . When we are told about another of their diversions—going into a marshy lagoon haunted by crocodiles, to drag the monsters out by the tail on to dry land, and slaughter them—we realise that these people are not so easy to understand as they appear at first sight. The cap is added to the climax by somebody who asks if all the houses in the village have hurricane lanterns, like the one we are visiting. No, the owner says, they cannot all afford them, and that is a pity, for nothing keeps off the spirits on the road to Port Moresby so effectively as a good hurricane lamp bought from the stores. All the men in the village, of course, are afraid to be out in the dark, but sometimes they cannot avoid it, and then “he plenty fright that man !”



To Elavara we proceed over a bridge several hundred feet long built right out in the water. It is quite a nice and safe bridge, according to native ideas, but a positive nightmare to ours, being made after the inevitable Papuan fashion, of small fragile sticks supported on high posts, without anything in the shape of a guard-rail. If you are barefoot, practically naked, smallish, and light, nothing could be more convenient; you trip over the sticks with the gait of a bird in a tree, and should one or two break, you merely stammer in your walk, so to speak, and catch up on the next. But the cumbrously clad and shod European is at a disadvantage, and very thankful to get safely over to the other side.

Elavara is more of a fortress than Hanuabada. It is built in the open sea and partly on the verge of a small solitary island, the bridge being the only connection with the mainland. The original reason for existence has passed away, in the case of these towns, and no new ones are being built in any known part of the Territory. But the natives still keep to the old ones, and repair them as they fall to pieces—partly from habit, no doubt, and partly because of the coolness that is only to be found in the sea-built villages.

We of the superior races are very fond of laughing at native conservatism, but there are glass panes in our own houses for all that. Why is it that in such a hot climate, it has never occurred to any of the people who have built, and are building, houses in Port Moresby that a European house can be set



*Photo 11. Whittier.*

# NATIVE CANOE

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out on piles in the sea just as well as a native one, and that this style would certainly be more healthy than the present plan, not to speak of the difference in temperature? Mosquitoes would be less troublesome in such houses than they are in the midst of the grass and trees, the full benefit of every breeze would be enjoyed, and instead of heated earth under the house, collecting rubbish and retaining all the warmth of the day, there would be the clean, fresh, cool water of the sea, ebbing and flowing with the tide. Nor would any risk from storms lessen the pleasure of such a dwelling, Port Moresby harbour being so safe and so sheltered that no wind could make the least difference to the people of the sea-houses.

Europeans are not much more easily moved out of their customary way than Papuans, however, and the hot little box of corrugated iron, set on a baking plain, still continues to be the ideal of the Port Moresby builder.

So much as we have seen to-day, every passing tourist on the steamer sees, every traveller who comes to the Unknown Land makes the first chapter of his book. From a literary point of view, the native villages about Port Moresby are almost as much used up as Mount Vesuvius or the Palaces of Versailles.

Yet they are significant to one who is interested in the future of Papua. They are among the straws that show what way the winds are blowing. The adaptability of the Papuan, the conservatism that

underlies his adaptability, giving it something to stand upon, and preserving him from the fate of the fluid-minded Eastern Pacific races—the trading instinct that he undoubtedly possesses, his submission to authority, coupled with an unacknowledged reserve that allows him to retain individuality and self-respect—all these, and more, are suggested to any considering mind by the native life of Hanuabada and Elavara. Such are the straws. Whither does the wind of progress seem to be sweeping them? Towards a completer civilisation, there can be no doubt—but not towards that well-intentioned philanthropic system of nation-making that has somehow contrived, with the best intentions, to make a gigantic shambles of the Pacific island world. The Papuan is not going to die out. He is a native of a different kidney to the soft Tahitian, the gentle, generous Samoan, the easily-moulded, pleasure-loving Hawaiian. The missionaries find him almost an impossible job, the traders need all their wits to make a living out of him. What time will make of him we can only guess, but judging from the past (short though that has been) we may fairly conclude that he will never become what the moribund races of the island world hastened to make themselves from the first—the white man's "sedulous ape."

Certain facts about Papua have been so often mentioned in works of travel much more serious in intention than the present, that they may almost be "taken as read" at this time of day. Everyone who

has ever opened a book about New Guinea knows that it is a country of innumerable tribes, often unlike in physical type, and, generally speaking, different languages. This is interesting to the student of philology or ethnology, but only strikes the average wanderer as a decided nuisance, when the difficulty of getting interpreters for out-of-the-way districts first comes home to him. It is a constant trouble to the Government, and the stumbling-blocks it throws in the way of the courts of law are almost incredible. Quite incredible, unless one has actually seen the process, are the means adopted to clear the path of justice ; nevertheless, I cannot refrain from relating a sample or two.

The Resident Magistrate of an out-of-the-way division hears a rumour, filtered down through half a dozen native tribes, that some member of a tribe that no one has ever seen, living in a district totally unknown, has killed and eaten his wife. Moreover, he hears that this man is a murderer of notoriety, and a terror to the country in which he lives. The R.M., who is probably an Australian of five or six and twenty, boasting just so much military training as home life on a cattle station and a few months in Port Moresby Government offices can give him, "sees his duty, a dead sure thing, and goes for it there and then." It is, to arrest that murderer.

He calls out a dozen of his native constabulary, loads them with provisions and a little "trade" (tobacco, beads, knives), packs his marching kit in a

small oilskin sack, and sets forth. In a couple of days he strikes unknown country and incomprehensible tongues. Perhaps one of his police can act as interpreter—he himself does not know more than a couple of languages, and neither of them is any use here ; but his dozen constabulary among them may muster fifteen or sixteen different tongues, and they try them all. . . . A hit ! the natives speak the language that Corporal Boromai used to know as a child, or something very like it. All is well for a day or so ; provisions are bought at the village ; the R.M. takes industrious notes of the country he is passing through, and the little party slides, and scrapes, and scrambles, and smashes on its slow way up and down the interminable mountains and through the dense dark jungles in the direction given them by the villagers. The next tribe they meet runs away with howls of terror and is seen no more. The next is never even seen, leaving only a handful of empty houses as a sign of its existence. After this the party keep a sharp look-out, and succeed in forcibly capturing a small boy, who nearly dies with terror of the unknown white demon who has seized him. They take the boy back to the nearest village that speaks a language spoken by one of the men, and find that the said village can't speak the language of the boy, but they think there is a place not very far off where there are people who speak a language that the boy might conceivably know. . . . The village is found, but it does not speak any language known



*Photo W. Whitten.*

DWARF FROM THE INTERIOR

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to the boy, and it adds the gratuitous information that the boy is a devil, and that only devils live in the mountains beyond that district, whose language no decent person would think of knowing.

By this time the provisions are out, one of the police has got a spear wound in his foot (acquired from a "cache" of spear-heads concealed in a forest track with the view of discouraging callers), and the R.M. is down with fever. He tells the boys to put him in his hammock and take him home; he'll attend to that matter of the murder later on.

Back at the station they are greeted with delight and envy by the police who have been left behind, and who spent the whole night of their departure crying bitterly because they were not taken too. The boy, who is as wild as a captured bird, refuses obstinately to eat. He is quite certain that the white devil wants to fatten him for his table, and he does not wish to make a dainty dish for his conqueror. The white devil does his best to win the little wild creature's confidence, and aided by the friendly black faces about him succeeds in doing so. The child consents to eat, accepts the wonderful presents that are made him, and becomes quite at home. In a few weeks he has picked up enough pigeon-English to interpret roughly with his tribe, and then the expedition starts again—always after that murderer. The left-behind police cry themselves nearly sick this time, for they see that the Taubada (chief) is taking plenty of cartridges, and they expect there will be

what they live in hope of and are constantly denied—a real row.

The same tramp, the same villages, once more the unknown district and the flying people, and, it may be, a stray arrow or spear flung from behind a tree as they pass. Now they reach the point attained before, and here comes in the use of the boy. The child is dressed up in gay cottons, hung with beads, and given a knife or two. He is then sent off alone into the bush, and the expedition sits down to wait. They may wait an hour, they may wait a couple of days. The boy is finding his people, and telling them that the white devils called Government are not bad devils—that they have treated him splendidly and given him marvellous presents, and that they want to be friends with the tribe. . . . It ends in the shy birds of the forest coming to hand, timidly, but with growing confidence. They are given presents, and told, through the boy, that the R.M. wants guides and interpreters to go on into the country of the murderer. Both guides and interpreters are forthcoming. From village to village, from hill-range to hill-range, through swamp and river and unbroken forest, the expedition takes its way, and, after adventures enough to fill a book, finds and surrounds the delinquent's refuge. There may be a fight before he is taken—the white lad and his dozen natives may have to beat off a couple of hundred Papuans armed with bows, clubs, and spears, or they may have to besiege and take a whole large town, with nothing but their pluck

and their rifles to see them through. These things have been done over and over again in Papua without attracting special notice—it is merely the magistrate's duty. In any case, the murderer is secured, handcuffed, and taken away amidst yells of distress from his tribe, and the first part of the play ends.

There may be a second when it is discovered that the murderer speaks a language which nobody at all understands—not the police, or the villagers on the way to the coast, or the captured boy or his tribe. If an interpreter cannot be found, what is to be done? The man must, for the good of the country, be punished. There is no reasonable doubt that he is the murderer; and he is quite prepared for any treatment that may be meted out to him, including eating.

Some colonies would hang him forthwith. That is not the system of Papua, however. The native must have justice, even if justice has to be compounded of unusual and inconvenient elements, including geographical and philological research; travel complicated by the attentions of alligators, snakes, and swamp leeches, and patient investigation into a tangle of sorcery and pig-stealing (two items almost always present in a Papuan murder case). An interpreter is procured by the same lengthy process that resulted in bringing in the murderer, and at the last he is brought to trial. He will not be hanged unless he has killed a white man (a rare offence), or unless his crime has been one of an aggravated kind. Common sorts of murder among the natives are punished by imprison-

ment only. In any case, he is heard in his own defence, and knows what is being done and why. And the interests of justice and of comparative philology have been attained.

That is what the curse of Babel means in Papua.

Some days after my arrival in Port Moresby there was a native dance in the village, and I went down with a party of friends to see it. It took place at night, lit up by the moon and a number of cocoanut torches, which latter were carried by the dancers. There was no danger of setting anyone's clothes on fire, because no one wore any, except the small contingent of girls, who were more like penwipers than human beings with the number of grass skirts they had put on. It was a display of male rather than female agility and grace, the women taking no part except a little shuffling up and down.

The spirit of Papua was there that night—the intangible, indescribable “spirit of place” that gives to travel three-fourths of its charm. It had haunted me all day long, in the monstrous shapes of the dark contorted hills through which I had been riding in the afternoon—in the huge antennæ of the “lakatoi” canoes that swept across the bay like flights of demon moths, through a sunset of volcano-red; in the thrumming, booming note of the native drums, beating like a restless heart all the evening in the village below—in the extraordinary hues of phosphoric blue that lit the uppermost reaches of the sky when the



*Photo W. Witten.*

NATIVE DANCERS: NORTHERN DIVISION

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dark was near at hand (a colour I saw many a time in Papuan sunset skies, but never elsewhere). Papuan, and nothing else, was the spirit of the dance. The grace of the island measures was not there, nor the art of European dancing; there were hardly any "steps," merely a general capering, which now and then concentrated itself into a slow advancing shuffle, made with swaying bodies and sleepy eyes. But the intoxicating throb of the drums carried by the dancers, the loud, brassy, booming song which they sang hour after hour, the ceaseless rippling and flickering of plumes and coloured leaves and grasses fastened on the heads and limbs of the naked brown bodies, the nodding and stamping and prancing, the savage measure of the dance—two-four, with a strong accent on the second beat—were fascinating enough to keep us watching there on the bare stretch of open ground above the village, in the glare of the torches and the smell of smoke and sandalwood and cocoanut oil, for more than an hour. After which—as a native dance may go on for a day and night, once started—we gave up and went home. As we left, a new series of leaps and bounds began in a squadron of dancers led by a wild naked figure with a woolly head of tremendous size, and a coiffure composed of six paradise plumes, two sets of parrot wings, and a halo of miscellaneous feathers.

"Who is that man-eater?" demanded a visitor, looking back at the pantomime demon leader with astonishment and a little awe.



"Garia!" called one of the whites.

The demon stopped his capers instantly, and came out of the dance, painted, perspiring, panting. He brought his right hand up to the salute, and stood at attention.

"You wanting the boat to-night, sir?" he inquired with deference. "I left my watch in my house, did not know the time. I go fetch the crew?"

It was Garia, the coxswain of the Governor's boat's crew, whom we had seen in the afternoon uniformed, grave, and responsible, handing the white visitors in and out of the boat with the air of a man-of-war officer.

"No, you're not wanted to-night," he was told. "We only wish you to show the ladies those feathers of yours, and your drum. Where did you get it?"

"I made him myself, when I was quite little boy," answered the coxswain, handing over the drum—an hour-glass-shaped instrument of dark wood, hollowed out and carved, and covered at the top with iguana skin, which is thin, semi-translucent, and rather like parchment.

The drum was admired and returned, and the party once more prepared to start.

"You want anything else, sir?" asked the coxswain.

"No, you can go."

With a long howl like a wild beast he leaped back into the dance and into savagery again at once, shaking and beating his drum, flinging his nodding plumes



A PAPUAN BARBER

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in the air, and showing his betel-stained teeth in a grin of fierce delight, as the capering squadron closed round him and drew him into the whirl once more.

. . . . .

Enough of the Port Moresby native. He is interesting in his own way, but one tires of him soon. The truth is that, in spite of his superficial quickness, he has less intellect and less character than many other of the Papuan races. And of the country about Port Moresby one soon sees enough. It is beautiful as to colouring—here, as everywhere throughout the Territory, sea, sky, and earth are painted with a palette of gems and fire—but the soil is barren, and there are no plantations. Now, it is the new plantation life that is the real attraction in Papua of to-day; and to see that we must go up into the mountains.

Anyone who has ever read geography for pleasure or of necessity must have noticed the peculiar deadness of facts as embedded—interred one might rather say—in geographical works. Nothing seems surprising; little is even interesting. . . . “This neighbourhood exhibits much volcanic activity at times, resulting in serious destruction of property.”—“Metalliferous tracts of value abound.”—“The river here precipitates itself into the valley of the . . ., down a perpendicular descent of several hundred feet.” . . . Burning mountains that overflow vineyards and villages—gold-mines where one makes a

fortune in a day—huge waterfalls dropping in smoke and spume down half a mountain side—these things may be objects of interest outside the covers of an educational work, but inside one merely yawns over them. So, in reading about Papua, one sees without emotion the statement that the main range of the country ascends rapidly from the coast, and reaches a height of thirteen thousand feet. It does not seem a thing to laugh or weep over, anyhow.

Yet here, as always, "things seen are mightier than things heard." That thirteen-thousand-foot range becomes a matter of extreme personal interest when once one has realised what it means. When one has ridden twenty miles from scorching Port Moresby up to the little bungalow at Warirata, nearly three thousand feet higher, and felt the cold of nights that demand warm rugs on the bed, and mornings when one must wear a serge coat till breakfast-time—when one listens to the complaints of the native mail-carriers coming down from the Kokoda track twenty miles further back, of the bitter chill and frost at the eight-thousand-foot gap—when one looks out on the long rises of Mount Victoria, lifting pale violet curve after pale violet curve up to the dim faint blues of a far-off summit near as high as the Jungfrau, and sees climate after climate—torrid, tropic, temperate, cold, from Calcutta to Shetland—spread out before one's very eyes—then one realises that the bald geographical fact one noted with so little emotion is really "something to make a song about," after all.

Where else, in all the British colonies, is there a country that offers almost every variety of temperature within a space of some fifty or sixty miles? We have been accustomed to speak and think of New Guinea as a place where the climate is terrible and the heat exhausting, deadly, inescapable. The description is scarcely correct from any point of view—Papua is not so hot as either India or Ceylon, and certainly not less healthy on the whole—and it is most incorrect when one pauses to remember that a great part of the country is colder than England. True, that part is inaccessible at present. But it will not always remain so. India had not always her cool hill stations, reached by marvellously graded roads, for the refreshment of tired officials and their families. The Cordilleras of South America must have been impassable, except to the Indians, for many a long year. And in Papua the distances to the hill country are in reality so small that, once the difficulties of the ground are overcome, the cool climates will be accessible to everyone without trouble or expense.

Back from the future to the present we come with a run, for it is seven o'clock in the morning, and three saddle-horses are standing in the shade outside the house, with three pack-horses and several "boys" visible further away. We are off into the Astrolabe Range, three of us, to have a look round and a good time; and it is not the day after to-morrow, but to-day, and there are no real roads, no bridges, no

carriages, no hotels on the way—nothing, in fact, but ourselves and our horses to get us through.

We are bound for the Sogeri country, some thirty-six miles away, and we intend to make a three days' journey of it, so as to add on some small detours and see everything thoroughly.

The day is hot already, and promises to be appallingly so later on, but nobody troubles about that. It does one's heart good to see the sensible, plucky way in which the resident of Papua accepts every disadvantage of the country, climatic and other, and in so doing takes the edge off most of them. In any other country only nine degrees south of the equator it would be thought a hazardous proceeding for a couple of ladies and their escort to start out on a twelve miles' ride in the middle of the day over an unsheltered road in the worst of the hot season. But the white settlers of Papua simply laugh in the face of the weather at all times, nor do they appear to suffer on that account. No one in this country arises at dawn to take an early cup of tea and a ride in the morning twilight, preparatory to a day spent mostly behind close blinds; no one fills up the hot hours with a siesta and creeps cautiously out at sundown. On the contrary, everyone is busy all day long at ordinary employments, indoor and out; meals are held at English hours; houses are not built with any special provision for heat, and nobody thinks of abandoning a day's ride or walk because the thermometer happens to be standing at ninety in the shade.

In justice to Papua, it must be added that ninety is a figure not often reached.

We travel, in this country, as people travelled all the world over before roads and railways were made—as they travelled in England during the Middle Ages. Ride when you can, and walk when you must, is the rule. There is always, however, a bridle-track to a plantation, and the arrival of guests is heralded by the jangling of pack-horse bells from afar. As we were bound for plantation country, we had the luxury of horses—how much a luxury it is, experiences in uncleared districts painfully impressed upon me later on.

Does the English reader know what a “swag” is? It is not a collection of burglariously acquired silver in a Gladstone bag, as popular literature might lead one to suppose. In Papua, a swag is a sack of painted sail-canvas, fitted with slings at the back and fastened by draw-strings of strong cord. It is the traveller's one indispensable possession, and takes the place of all the complicated apparatus of trunks, portmanteaux, dressing-cases, and hat-boxes, which he is obliged to leave behind in port. What you cannot put into a swag, or into two or three swags, you cannot have up country, for cabin-trunks and dress-baskets are not convenient to sling on the backs of horses or native carriers. There is a certain amount of art in packing for one of these journeys. Into one swag go your blankets (you may think you cannot want them, but you will), your mosquito net, your woollen suit or



dress for wet evenings in high altitudes. Into another go your clothes, rolled into many tight little bundles. Another is filled with tins of meat, parcels of biscuit, and rice, tea, sugar, and tinned milk.' These are all fastened on the pack-horses, two swags apiece, and a couple of billy-cans are added—no one can possibly travel without a billy-can in any part of Australasia. If the English reader wants to know what a billy-can is, I can assure him that there is nothing mysterious about it. It is simply a plain tin can with a lid, such as is used in England for carrying milk. Simple though it is, the British traveller will bring derision upon himself if he does not know one when he sees it, and especially if he makes any mistakes about its inseparable companion, the pannikin. Let him not suppose rashly, as I did, that a pannikin is a small frying-pan; and let him carefully refrain, when he does find out what it is, from calling it a mug, lest the epithet should be insultingly transferred to himself.

Strictly by the way—Micawber was right for once, when he fitted out his young family for their Australian travels by tying tin drinking-vessels round their waists. It is the correct practice to ride thus ornamented in Papua. A sheath-knife is also invaluable—not for any purpose of self-defence, but for a score of miscellaneous jobs, such as tin-opening, cutting bread, lifting a hot billy-can off the fire, splitting nuts, peeling fruit, etc. etc. etc. Thus accoutred, with a wide cowboy hat of thick felt,

nailed boots, putties, and a short skirt, the equestrienne of Papua is suitably outfitted, though she would certainly not pass muster in Rotten Row.

The first few miles of the ride were easy, if rather warm. The road was an actual carriage road, and made our bush equipments look rather silly, though there was no one to see except a native or two, plodding along under loads of manioc or banana. Open grassy plains, sprinkled with the pale grey-green of the eucalyptus tree, surrounded us for miles, with a few low hills in the distance. This went on until we reached an ascent, turned a corner, and faced a sudden down-slope, when the splendour of the hill-country suddenly broke upon us.

I am afraid it was not the beauty of the scene—though that was marvellous—that chiefly impressed me as I reined up on the top of the slope, above a sea of weltering peaks and ridges and clambering crests, all veiled and softened in velvety green forest. I only said to myself, in a kind of stony despair, “Good heavens, have I got to get through *that*?” and wondered how, short of an aeroplane, it was to be done.

Another sentence out of the geographies came back and hit me in the face—“The vegetation of New Guinea is notably luxuriant.”

Luxuriant? Well, if luxuriance means an inundation of dense, tall, dark forest, knitted inextricably together with creepers, canes, and lianas, overflowing every level, filling every valley, rushing up every

mountain and down it again, submerging the whole land under a flood of triumphant and impenetrable greenery fifty to a hundred feet deep—then the “vegetation” of Papua fairly deserves the title. I could not see the smallest scratch of a track up to the verge of the horizon, except the road on which we were travelling, and it obviously came to an end before long. How travel was to be managed through such a country taxed one’s imagination to guess. I knew, however, that the problem would be sure to work itself out somehow or other, and abandoned it for the present.

And here I will add—what did not come to my knowledge until some time later—that this luxuriance of growth advertises the value of the land to the experienced eye. I can imagine the dismay with which it must strike the settler from home countries, who has taken up land from a map in Port Moresby, and views for the first time the impenetrable tangle of primæval forest under which his estate lies concealed. But the knowing hand looks at the unbroken masses of velvety green with satisfaction. Land that can raise that can raise anything; and every week will see a bigger handful of clearing plucked out of the smooth surface of tree tops.

People accustomed to the leisurely forestry of Europe have no idea how little “clearing” means to an Australian or New Zealander. It takes a month to cut down a small copse in England, with a dozen labourers hacking patiently away at tree after tree,

digging out stumps, cutting off branches, tidying things up as they go. . . . In Papua, an Australian "cocky" (as the outback farmer who shoots cockatoos for the pot is rudely called) would set to work with fifty native "boys" at seven shillings a month, and have twenty acres open to sun and wind in the same time. No landscape gardening there—the big trees are hacked down and left where they fall until it is convenient to set fire to them; the stumps and roots rot away in a little time, and add value to the soil. It seems untidy and desolate and ugly; but the stretch of bare brown earth littered with splintering logs and black stumps is beauty itself to the planter's eye, and in a very few months, when the coffee, or the rubber, or the cocoanut palms begin to spring up, it will be as picturesque as any English park.

The richness of soil that I have mentioned is one of the many wonders that are commonplace, even matter of course, to the dweller in the tropics, yet not in any degree realised or understood by Europeans. The rainfall in Papua is enormous, amounting to as much as 180 inches per year in some places. The heat is great at times, and the constant decay of vegetation in the warmth and damp makes the whole country one vast forcing-bed. In other words, the conditions that we produce with care and expense under five or six feet of glass, are the natural conditions of the continent of New Guinea.

The plants that grow in such a soil are valuable in proportion. Where the products of poorer lands

bring their fives and tens of pounds per ton, those of the tropics bring twenties, fifties, and hundreds. Rubber is worth over five hundred pounds a ton. Hemp fibres are worth thirty or more. Coffee brings sixty upwards. There is a gold mine in the earth of these rich countries, and the planter is the prospector and miner.

I had known this in a vague and general way, but the sight of the tropic forest was the first thing that really brought it home to me. And I wondered, as we turned our horses down the slope and got on our way again, how it was that the millions at home knew so little, and cared so much less, about these golden lands lying unawaked and untouched, like the Sleeping Beauty of the fairy tale, in the far-away corners of England's wonderful empire.

That night we all slept in jail.

We had not committed any crimes—any that were found out, at all events. Our stay in prison was not, therefore, enforced. We only put up at the jail because there was nowhere else to sleep, unless we had camped on the track. The hostelry in question lay at the end of our first day's ride (only eleven miles), on the banks of the Laloki River, and in the midst of country nearly all uncleared. Some acres of land lying about the jail had been cleared for vegetable gardens and for a Government nursery; there was a native overseer in charge of the place, and

a few Papuan prisoners wandering in a lost sort of manner about the track and the banana fields when we arrived. I imagine they were looking for us; we had wasted time on the way, and it was dark when we arrived.

The jail buildings, three or four in number, irresistibly suggested fowl-farming on a large scale, or summer-houses of an eccentric kind, or large clothes-baskets left out and forgotten by a party of giant washerwomen. What they did not suggest was restraint or imprisonment of any sort. And, indeed, I found out later that there is not a jail in Papua out of which any prisoner could not break with a little determination and a one-bladed pocket-knife.

The prisoners, cheerful-looking brown men in broad-shouldered tunics, live and sleep in these peculiar bird-cage houses, and spend their days doing a little gardening, planting, and clearing. They were delighted to see us, and most eager to do anything they could for our assistance. The head jailer, a woolly-haired native who spoke a good deal of English, received us with the air of a host doing the honours of his mansion, and all the jolly brown prisoners, that day and the next, were so amiable and so kind, chasing fowls for our dinner, picking fruit, catching our horses, that we really felt they regarded us as their personal guests. Which no doubt they did.

"What are these people imprisoned for?" I asked, with some perplexity. I am sure they could

not be criminals in the ordinary sense of the word.

Well, they were not. Most of them had murdered somebody, and concealed the crime by eating the victim ; hardly a commonplace peccadillo. A great many were sorcerers, sorcery being an offence fully recognised by the Government and classed as criminal, for excellent reasons. Some of them were in prison for libel, or " spreading false reports," which would seem to point to rapid development of the Papuan mind along the lines already laid down by the Caucasian. The presence of a single forger—so far unique in Papuan criminal history—marked the high-water level reached in the struggle of the black man's mind after the white. This New Guinea Jim the Penman had been sent with signed orders to fetch goods from a store many times. One day it occurred to him (since he could write) to pencil his master's name on a piece of paper and get various desirable things for himself. The plan was good so far as it went, but the brilliant mind that had thought out for itself this new way of circumventing the universal curse of labour stopped short at the idea of concealment. Consequently arrest, trial, and a term in the Laloki bird-cage.

Nothing is singular in Papua, simply because everything is. It would have been singular in any other country for two white women and one white man to go peaceably to sleep in a couple of wooden-barred cages, eleven miles from anywhere, in the midst

of some dozens of savage murderers confined only by wickerwork walls, without any apprehension as to unpleasant results. It was not singular here, because we all knew quite well that the prisoners had no intention in the world of giving anybody any trouble. They had certainly killed and eaten a wife or so, or an inconvenient aunt or grandfather, for good reasons of their own. The white rulers, for reasons of *their* own, had chosen to object, and the gentleman who had smashed in the head of another gentleman fully understood that he had to pay for it, and that if he expressed his feelings after that fashion again he might even be hanged. He did not bear malice ; like the man in Kipling's poem, he only said to himself that he had "taken his fun where he found it, and now he must pay for his fun"—it was quite simple. As to annoying this extremely interesting and exciting party of visitors who had come to enlighten the dullnesses of his gardening, why, he would have given them anything he had, even to the half of his supper !

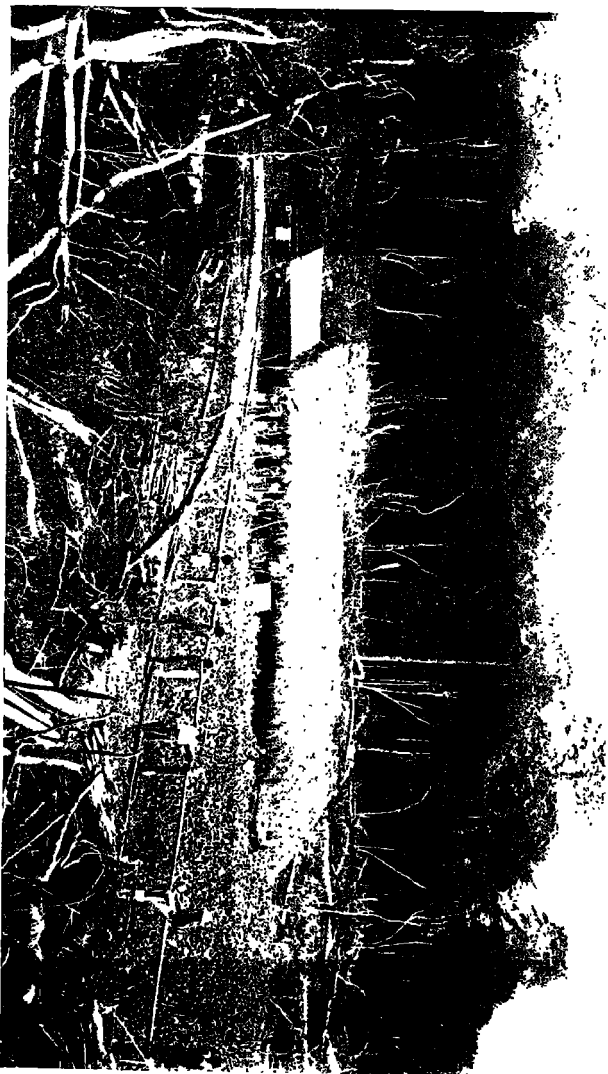
My first night in jail (the phrase somehow reminded me of the title of a tract) proved peaceful enough, in spite of the loud whirring and rattling of the swarms of crickets in the trees and the croaking of giant regiments of frogs in the river. My cell was part of the head jailer's house. It was built of slabs or slips of wood which were very far from meeting ; the floor was of the same material, and allowed one to look right through down to the ground several feet below



and see the rats and fowls running about underneath. The furniture consisted of a single sloping shelf. My hammock and net were slung from the supporting posts of the roof, isolating me from the possible attentions of centipedes and scorpions in a way that added a good deal to my peace of mind. As for snakes and giant lizards, there were plenty of them in the bush close at hand, and plenty of alligators in the river not twenty yards away, but I had learned by this time that they were not to be feared, being quite as much afraid of the traveller as the traveller could be of them.

We spent the whole of the next day in the neighbourhood of the jail, as no one was pressed for time, and I wanted to see the Government nursery, one of several organised by the Director of Agriculture, the Hon. Miles Staniforth Smith.

It was about half an hour's walk from the jail grounds. The way led first of all through the garden, where yams, manioc, and other vegetables are raised for the prisoners' food. A garden in Papua, it must be explained, never means an ornamental flower-ground ; it is always a strictly practical place, devoted to small useful crops. There were a few acres of bananas here spreading out their great green flags and enormous crimson flowers above the steep bank of the sliding, muddy river. We stopped in the shade long enough to take a good look at the Laloki, a bigger river than any in England, though it is only one of the minor streams of Papua. Alligators abound



PAPUAN GOVERNMENT NURSERY FOR SUPPLYING ECONOMIC PLANTS

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in its yellow depths, and a native who swims the stream does so at the risk of his life.

Nevertheless a number of them did swim the Laloki in flood, and at a very dangerous point, not long ago. The Governor of the country was making a tour of inspection, and wanted to get to the other side of the river. No boat or canoe was available, and His Excellency expressed his intention of swimming. The small official staff of course accompanied their chief, as they accompany him into a hostile cannibal village or a swamp full of snakes, leeches, and scrub ticks, or any other warm corner where Governmental duty may demand their presence. The natives, seeing that the white men intended to take the risk, plunged in to the number of a dozen or two along with them, simply to make the swim a little less dangerous by force of numbers. All got across without accident.

One wonders at times how the gilded and ribboned A.D.C.'s and secretaries of the Government Houses in older colonies would enjoy the amazing duties that fall to the share of their confrères in Papua!

Beyond the jail gardens, beyond the banana groves on the river bank, past the clearings in the forest where enormous trunks of valuable timber lay wasting and rotting on the ground, by a cool pathway through the bush and along a rough fence, we came upon the Government nursery.

Judging by the title, it ought to have been something like a botanical garden at home, with tidy

gravelled walks and beds full of labelled specimens, and big official buildings, and a neat house for a curator. It *was* a newly-cleared space of ground without any walks at all, with a number of beds, a few brushwood-roofed sheds for young plants, and a native hut for the man in charge. There are no "frills" of any kind about Papuan administration.

Nevertheless, the rough place, with three more like itself in different parts of the Territory, has proved itself useful and practical. It is from these nurseries that the planters get their seeds and cuttings—their cocoanuts of good kinds for setting out, their rubber seeds or stumps, their coffee plants, their hemp slips, and almost anything they may want to experiment with in the way of spices, drugs, etc. They can also get instructions that will enable them to start their plantations in the best way—how to line and trench and plant out, how to make nurseries, how to weed and prune—in general, how to make their estates pay. The old idea that a man must have served an apprenticeship of years before attempting to grow tropical products on his own account has quite died out in these new go-ahead colonies. There is no jealously-guarded mystery about the raising of coffee, hemp, rubber, or any other paying plant. If a man knows something from past experience, all the better. If not, however, he can see all the standard books on his subject in Port Moresby, can get his plants in the country, and learn enough theoretically to keep him from wasting his money. This is what

more than one really successful planter has already done. I am compelled to add, however, that the successful planter rather often ranges himself on the side of those who declare that "a man must have practical experience," once his own experience is gained, and is very ready to laugh at the presumption of the "new chum" who wants to defy tradition by going into the water before he knows how to swim.

## CHAPTER III

Along the Laloki—Wonderful Rona—The country of copper—A roadside camp—A plantation bungalow—Where are the English?—The humours of manslaughter—Up-and-down country—The daily lucky-bag—"Heaven sends walnuts . . ."—Unknown fauna of New Guinea—On the long trail again.

NEXT morning our cavalcade set off again—three riders, six horses, and several "boys" afoot. Several agreeably-mannered assassins saw us to the beginning of the track, and begged us, so far as we could gather, to come back again soon.

There was a "good road" all the way, it appeared, in spite of the unbroken look of the country. You cannot always see your road about the Astrolabe until you reach it—and not invariably then, truth compels me to add. You may, if you are not a good "bushman," mistake the highway for a pig-track, or a casual landslip, or the bed of a dried-up stream; or you may, on the other hand, mistake any one of these for the road. The moral is, that you must have a guide. It is not a good thing to get hopelessly off the track anywhere in New Guinea. One is not likely to die of thirst; but hunger, in these unpeopled solitudes, would rapidly put an end to any white man who strayed away from his party and did not succeed in finding it again. True, there is game,

but explorers know the danger of relying entirely on what one may shoot in a country so encumbered by mountain and forest that rapid progress is impossible. Often enough, riding along the narrow ribbon of forest track, I have looked at the huge, silent, scarce penetrable dells and billows of woodland beside me, much as a passenger on a steamer may look at the unfathomable sea below the rail. So safe upon this tiny space of plank, or clearing—so close to death, one step outside! . . . The intense silence of the Papuan forests, the immovable star of light standing fixed on each glossy leaf in the depths of the ocean of green, while high above, the lofty crests may be struggling furiously with a south-east gale, and breaking up the sunrays into scintillating fire, seems to add to the almost personal fear excited by these great solitudes. The spirit of the wilderness is there, and none of the little shelters erected by Old World peoples for their shivering souls to creep into, in the presence of the unknown, can serve our turn. Pan, the god of river reed-beds and sunny thickets, through which a soft-skinned nymph might flit like a butterfly—Baldur, stately and gentle spirit of murmuring pine-woods, and green mountain slopes where sweet-breathing cattle wander—all the quaint and graceful and poetic figures of northern and southern mythology alike—do not their very apparitions tremble, and reproach us with gentle frightened eyes, when we set them down in fancy in these primæval wildernesses? . . . Nature in the Old World has



been for so many hundred and thousand years just "the old nurse" of her children, that it is terrifying to meet her face to face in the lands where she turns a hard unseeing countenance upon us, and crushes us—not for sport, simply not knowing of our existence—with one least finger-tip of the giant hand we have unwittingly brushed against. Yet our revenge is waiting, for in the generations that are to come we shall seize and crush her and tame her to our will, as throughout the centuries long since forgotten she was tamed in the countries that we have made our own.

Not to-day, but to-morrow, our way lies through these great forests. To-day we are riding merrily and easily enough upon a mighty highway full three feet wide in places, leading up the course of the Laloki River, along the side of a valley that is certainly one of the most beautiful valleys in the world, but that, not possessing a hotel with a brass band and a motor-car service, nor being advertised in tourist time-tables, is only thought to be rather pretty by the few settlers who occasionally pass that way.

The Laloki gorge is here at least a thousand feet in sheer depth, and looks a good deal more. Closed in by magnificent ramparts and castellations of basalt, with here and there an unconsidered forest or two dropping down its sides like a green kerchief forgotten by some giant queen, with tall tree-ferns spreading spider-webs of emerald lace into the blue sky, and cockatoos soaring like flights of white butterflies against the thunder-purple ranges in the far

distance—with the great river itself singing away far below, like a silver thread wound by unseen hands from the giant spindle of the great white waterfall—it is indeed a spot worth much travel and many pains to see.

Immense black masses of stone, looking like sponges steeped in ink, lie scattered all over the valley. These are indications of the mineral wealth of the Astrolabe country; to the trained eye they spell "COPPER" in large capitals. There are several paying claims rather lower down, and a company has lately undertaken the further exploitation of the district. Papua is as full of valuable minerals as a pudding of plums; unfortunately, they take a good deal of finding, and a good deal of getting at when found. But they pay well for discovery when the prospector has money enough to fit out a small expedition, and stay away in comfort some months if necessary. It is the small miner, with his dish and pannikin and swag for all wealth, who comes to grief in Papua, thinking, misguidedly, that the methods which answer in Australia will answer in Australia's neighbouring colony. They will not, and do not, but they have filled many a roughly dug grave on the Mamba and Gira rivers and in the steaming Woodlark Islands, and they have succeeded in giving this unlucky dog of a Papua a bad name that it never fairly deserved, in consequence.

We have to get off and tramp for a mile or two at the steepest part of the track. In this country you

do not exactly ride when you go out riding—you take a walk accompanied by your horse, and get a lift every now and then. We have had several long lifts to-day, and do not at all grudge the walk up the big hill, especially as we follow the custom of the country in taking hold of our horses' flowing tails and letting them drag us behind. This rests the horse and rests the rider at the same time—a matter of some importance on roads that are for the most part quite steep enough to sit down upon with support for the feet and something to lean against at almost any part of the journey.

At the top of the hill comes our reward—we are in sight of Rona Falls.

We have heard them booming in the distance for a mile or more, and here they are below us—at least half a mile away, and not to be reached save by a climb that nobody ever has time to take at this stage of a long day's journey—but grand beyond description.

Has anyone ever made a satisfactory pen-picture of a great waterfall? To say that Rona Falls is about three hundred feet in sheer height—considerably higher than Niagara, though wanting in the immense breadth of that famous cataract—that it drops down into a deep black gorge, and makes a lake clear as grey agate at the foot of the fall—that there are flights of white cockatoos on the heights, and great dim mountains in the distance—this is to say as much as a page of word-painting could say, which is nothing at all. . . . One is, perhaps, not sorry. To keep Rona

Falls to oneself, as the lover of an unknown mountain maid may keep his pleasant secret hidden in his heart, is well worth while, after all.

That night we came to the camping ground fairly satiated with beauties of scenery. I know that towards sunset we passed through wonderful peaks and passes, and in view of exquisite river country, but I looked at it as stolidly as my own horse, being quite incapable of appreciating any longer. Most travellers, one fancies, must have noticed this dulling of the mind that takes place towards the end of a day of special beauty, though few are egotistic enough to mention it. If anyone had pointed out to me a replica of the Great Pyramid of Cheops, or one of the fire-fountains of Hawaii, springing up a hundred yards from the track, I should only have resented the interruption at that hour of the day. What really interested all of us was—should we get to the camp before dark, and especially, how we should get across the river?

There is nothing more charming and poetical—in a picture gallery or a poem—than a ford. At home, where bridges follow roads as naturally as feet follow legs, the ford is merely a picturesque spot where the little girl in a sunbonnet drives the cattle across of an evening, or where the fisherman from the great house on the hill wades in long boots and fly-trimmed hat, casting a line across the oily shallows. In “the new and naked lands” it is something very different—something that makes or spoils the comfort of an

entire journey, that holds the fortunes of a great district in its capricious hand, that may measure out death or life, even, as the rains in the hills and the rising of the flood may decree.

It had been raining a good deal that day, and we had all got wet through a good many times, though no one thought a trifle like that worth mentioning. More, it had been raining up in the mountains for several days, and there was no knowing what the Laloki might be doing, up here above the falls. And the light was failing as a lamp fails when the oil runs out. And the track was so slippery with clay and water that our horses could only crawl. It did not seem certain that we should get across.

But in the livid green gloom that follows a wet sunset among the hills, we did strike the slope leading to the river, and in another minute all our horses were sliding and slithering horribly, right down to the ford. It looked very high, and the stream gushed up to the girths at once, so that we had to put our feet on our saddles and cling on as we might. The force of the river was tremendous, and the beasts staggered under it so that they could scarce make way. In places it was so deep that the saddles were wet, and there was a very nasty little fall close to our crossing place; but the light held good till we were across; and nobody fell down. . . . It was a relief to be out of the river and scrambling up the darkening slope on the other side, for lives have been lost on the Laloki ford before now; and besides, it is not

*Photo W. H. Hitten.*

CARRIERS CROSSING A RIVER

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easy to keep the unbidden thought of crocodiles out of one's head, when traversing a New Guinea river. Waterfalls do not stop the crocodile in its up-stream migrations ; it simply gets out and travels overland when a fall is reached ; and so it comes about that the rivers of the Astrolabe range are not by any means free from these troublesome brutes, in spite of their height above the sea.

The camp, when we reached it—quite in the dark now—looked almost homelike, so glad was the wet and tired and hungry party to see its night quarters. There was not much to see, however. The “rest-house” consisted of a thatch roof supported on four tree trunks, with a sort of rough divan made of split branches running along one side of the space below. Walls there were none. A good fire was blazing under the roof on the bare ground, and a Papuan native with a very large head was tending a big billy-can out of which issued tempting smells.

There was a small surveyor's tent near which served as dressing-room to the ladies, and when we had extracted dry clothes from our “swags,” and changed, we came out on to the high, dark, windy plateau, where the night breeze was crying among the eucalyptus trees, and the ripple of the Laloki rose up from far below. The Papuan boy had taken off the billy-can now, and produced another from a second fire ; and we all sat down on the fowl-perch divan to enjoy milkless tea and curried tin as one only enjoys food eaten “on the road.”



Rolled in our blankets, for the night was quite cold, Mrs. ——— and I slept on the fowl-perch (it really did not look like anything else) to the music of clanking horse-bells. You tie a large iron bell round your horse's neck when you camp, so that you may know where he is, and you link his forefeet together with leathern handcuffs called hobbles so that he cannot wander very far away. He revenges himself as a rule by walking round and round your uneasy couch all night long, shaking his head violently. Towards dawn you get up, and saying things to yourself which you hope no one overhears, you unstrap the bell, and slap the harmless creature's face as hard as you can. He sidles away, and you go back to sleep. . . . And in the morning the boys take an hour to find the beast in the valley where it has betaken itself. It did not care to stay about the camp, once you took off that bell.

We were in the coffee country now, nearly two thousand feet above sea-level. The climate was notably changed. There was still plenty of heat in the middle of the day, but it was not oppressive, and the mornings and evenings were crystalline and cool. Fever, I was not surprised to hear, does not exist in the Astrolabe range (unless in the case of people who have brought it up with them from the lowlands), and white people enjoy excellent health.

"What about the natives?" I asked. It had puzzled me a good deal, during the past day or two, to note that the country was apparently desolate of all

native life. We had not passed a single house or village, nor had we seen a solitary Papuan on the track, except a few carriers.

There were villages—a good many of them—on the road we had traversed, I was told. The country was peaceful now, but in the times when the natives were ceaselessly raiding and killing one another, it was necessary to build the villages where they could not easily be found or surprised.

So, if you went off the track and climbed about among the apparently inaccessible peaks of the high ranges, you would find village after village, some quite near to the road, others far away, but all cleverly concealed from sight in the dense vegetation. Many of them were built on the sides of precipices in such a way that the inhabitants could only gain access to them by climbing up long ladders. Others, again, were set on the top of sharp peaks. There were even some of the celebrated tea houses not many miles away, but it was not likely that we should have time to visit them. Anyhow, it was a fact that the natives of that part of the country were not easily visited. No, they were not hostile; they simply kept to their old ways, and did not trouble about the whites. And in any case their numbers were small. Most of the land about the Astrolabe was vacant; that was one of the reasons for its becoming a centre of settlement. The Government in Papua did not allow settlers to have any land that was or might be useful to the native tribes. Fortunately, there was plenty for all—millions

of acres in the Territory that nobody needed ; and there was plenty even up here, where the whites had been nibbling about for twenty years.

I was soon to see for myself. The third day's ride—a short and easy one—led us through tracts of dense dark forest and over many little ranges unseen in the surrounding "bush," but felt as we scrambled slowly up and down to our destination for the present—a plantation in the very heart of the Astrolabe mountains, some seven-and-thirty miles from Port Moresby.

It is easy to do the journey in two days, and some of the residents can do it in one. We had come slowly, as my companion was not able for trying rides ; but we had certainly not lost by the delay, since there had been all the more time to enjoy the wonders of the scenery.

Anything more beautiful than the little mountain house to which we came in the declining sun of the late afternoon was surely never seen out of a fairy tale. It stood tiptoe on the very peak of a sharp little hill, with a clump of giant bamboos, like huge green ostrich plumes a hundred feet high, serving as background to its quaint prettiness of architecture. It was a mere three-roomed, one-storeyed bungalow, almost all deep verandah and overhanging eaves, with a flight of rustic steps leading up to its little brown door, and a high, deep, palm-thatch roof set low down on its walls of woven bamboo, like a shady hat pulled over a planter's sun-browned face. It looked abso-

lutely harmonious, and as much a part of the place as a bird's nest built in a tree.

William Morris would have liked that little bungalow, for it unconsciously illustrated many of his ideas; perhaps yet more those of Ruskin. It was nothing whatever but a small cheap house, put together out of native materials because planking and iron were dear and difficult to carry; but it had somehow managed to capture just that perfect simplicity and inevitable beauty after which our own "rustic" and "artistic" styles too often toil in vain. The deep vault of the roof, the immense eaves, the warm brown tones of thatch and wall, the steps and verandah rails made out of saplings roughly barked, the windows—shutters of bamboo panelling that swung outward on a hinge and fastened with a bar—all were perfectly fitted to their end and perfectly satisfying to the eye. And the view!

When one had climbed slowly up the steep corkscrewed path that led to the bungalow—passing between borders of pineapples in full bearing, and close by a trailing mass of granadilla vine heavy with varnished fruit—one stood upon a very small space of artificially levelled ground, just large enough to support the house. In front and at each side the red earth fell suddenly away, so that the tops of the young rubber trees shook their fimbriated leaves almost under the verandah, and the coffee shrubs made a quaint pattern of foreshortened foliage right down to the river below. When one stood upon the

steps, the scarlet and pink foliaged crotons seemed to stretch their leaves right across a small, bright miniature painting of stream and coffee plantation and green grass and brown-roofed machine houses, into the high blue sky above the belt of uncleared trees. It was as if the house had been built upon a watch-tower.

The plantation was a mere handful of some sixty acres snatched out of the heart of the bush. It lay at the bottom of a cup-shaped hollow, surrounded on all sides but one by perpendicular walls of grass and trees. On that one side the river had made an opening, and through the rent in the dark green tapestry of forest one saw the far-away blue hills. . . .

All through the Astrolabe mountains one comes every now and then, unexpectedly, upon these lovely glimpses of sapphire and hyacinth-coloured ranges, framed in rugged gaps of dark-green forest. . . . Pages of unwritten poetry every one, full of fantastic dreams and butterfly fancies that only break in the capturing. . . .

But in actual travel, one does not often make the proper reflections at the proper moment—indeed, it may be taken as a rule that one makes the wrong and un-proper reflections, at any time when fine feelings might seem to be called for. I certainly did not begin poetising about distant views of the Astrolabe on the moment of our arrival at the coffee plantation. That came days later. At the moment, I was too hungry to think seriously of anything except food,

though only a Burns Philp pack-mule could have been totally insensible to the beauty of the place.

We gave the horses to the boys and went into the house. Most of its furniture was a makeshift, concocted out of local materials, but there was not a bit of it that you could not have put into an "interior," and delighted in if you were a great painter. There were no pictures on the wall, but you could always have one—much better than anything Corot or Turner could have done for you—by simply swinging wide one of the oblong bamboo-plait shutters and instantly painting on the wall a matchless landscape study, four feet by three. The door generally framed in a larger and more brilliant piece of "genre," composed of several rose and madder-red croton shrubs, and one or two of bright daffodil colour, with a butterfly as big as a swallow, and most brilliantly blue, hovering in the sun above the leaves. The back door opened upon a picture after the Japanese style—a gigantic arcade of feathery bamboos fluttering with the pretty black and white wings of small birds that came after the drying coffee. And after dark, that you might not miss the beauties of the day, fireflies came and made illuminations of ghost-like green all along the edges of the overhanging thatch, where glass-like drops of the sunset shower hung still and clear, sending out crystal rays in the faint light of the lamps inside the house. And all day and all night the little cool river down below kept on singing.

If luxury is wanting in the life of a Papuan planter

beauty never need run short. There is scarcely a plantation in the Territory that is not picturesque by nature, and none that cannot be made so. The more favoured beauty spots—and of these there are many—need little to turn them into very Paradises of loveliness. Brilliant shrubs and trees take root and grow for the asking; flowers are neglected for the most part, but would grow, practically without attention, if once sown. The numbers of rivers and streams that cut through the mountain ranges and the natural lie of the ground, always more or less sloping, suggest fountains, ponds, terraces almost of themselves. There is not one of the economic products of Papua that is not beautiful in itself. Moreover, nothing could be more stately than the avenues of splendid palms that make up a copra plantation. Coffee might well be grown anywhere as an ornamental shrub of the highest beauty, apart from its value. Sisal-hemp is to all appearance the same as the ornamental aloe that is grown in pots all over the Continent. Rubber is an extremely handsome tree at any stage of growth. I know well there are many who will laugh at the very idea of considering appearances where a plantation is concerned; but if a man can combine the pleasures (which are undoubtedly great) of ornamental gardening and park-making, with the profit of copra, or coffee, or rubber trading, it is surely so much to the good for him.

For many weeks after that visit to the Astrolabe, when wandering about the Territory seeing district

after district emerge from savagery to civilisation and beauty, the vision of certain houses in England and Ireland used to haunt me with a sense of painfully wasted forces. The pioneering and reclaiming instinct is so strong in the whole British race that it finds an outlet in many strange ways when denied its natural career. I have known well-to-do families in the country who did their own building, gardening, baking, soap-making, out of sheer pleasure in handling elemental things ; some who regarded the clearing of a bit of copse, or the altering of the course of some small stream, or the planting of a thousand young trees, as a tit-bit much too dainty to be left to the hands of labourers, and who would ask instead a few favoured friends to come and enjoy the task in their company. I have seen men of high education and refinement absorbed in the poor and unprofitable haying of their own grounds to such an extent that they could scarcely be got into the house for a meal, and counting every hundredweight of crop with far more interest than they ever showed in the harvesting of dividends, patients, or clients. And—(*pace* Emil Reich and his school)—I have known hundreds of country ladies who loved the handicrafts of the house and garden to the full as much as their grandmothers did, and sadly missed the many absorbing little household tasks that recent civilisation had placed out of their reach. And I longed to see a few hundred such people settled in this half-tamed land, to use their northern energies and their snow-fed strength,



and their dormant powers of organisation, contrivance, adaptation, in the service of the new young country.

After all, why not? What are the sons of these families doing? Entering overcrowded professions that will provide bread and butter for middle age at the price of all their youth, and some thousands of pounds to boot—going out to colonies where a living must be wrenched from bitter soils buried half the year in snow—spending their lives in airless offices, with a fortnight's shooting in the autumn, and a stray week-end on the golf-links, for all their share of the great out-of-door world that calls to every Englishman so insistently and often, perforce, so vainly. It is true that in colonial life, as elsewhere, you cannot have your cake and eat it. You cannot enjoy the pleasure of breaking in a new country and the pleasures of all the newest plays and latest exhibitions at the same time. You cannot shut the door on that tiresome and costly jade, Society, and yet have her at hand to amuse an occasional dull moment. It is exciting and pleasant to follow the hounds and carry a gun across the stubble, and it is also exciting and pleasant to hunt crocodiles on your plantation river and make trophies of teeth and jaws, or to go after wild boar in the hills; but the man who has the one must not look back and hanker after the other. Still, all in all, the right kind of man finds the colonial life the more satisfying and profitable of the two. As for the wrong kind of man, he, like the

poor, is always with us, but, unlike the poor, he is not with us (individually) for long. You can waste your capital and go to the dogs in Papua just as completely and as quickly as in London, if you are the kind to do it.

It may as well be said here as anywhere else that, once for all, Papua is no country for the man who cannot raise at least a couple of thousand to start on ; no country for the old, the delicate, the idle, the fine gentleman or fine lady. For the well-bred man who because of his breeding will turn a hand to anything, and because of his racial pride will never say die, for the man with youth and strength and common sense, and the woman who will "do without" and see him through—Papua is the country.

Lands are given for nothing (actually, for ten years, and at a trifling rental for long leases). Seeds and plants are given at cost price, instruction and advice free. Speculators in land are kept out, and suitable settlers encouraged in every way. Settlers without money are not wanted, not asked for, not welcomed—in fine, are requested to go elsewhere ; but settlers with anything from two to five thousand may be promised (with ordinary industry and luck) a fortune in a very few years' time.

To return to the coffee plantation and our visit, Mrs. C. and myself unpacked our swags and settled down for a week or two ; our escort and the horses went back to port ; and we were left, two solitary women in the Astrolabe mountains, among a heathen

and uncivilised population, with only a couple of white men, some miles off, in the whole surrounding district. We were on the verge of the unknown country, as one is in most inland districts of Papua. The natives in the hills at the back of the plantation had, in some cases, never seen a white man, and very few of them had ever seen a white woman, as witness the many personally conducted touring parties that came down to stare shyly at us during the course of the next few days. We had only a native girl and man to look after us, and we were living in a house that was a mere shelter from heat and rain, as easily broken into as a basket.

Yet we were perfectly safe—much more than we should have been under similar conditions in the suburbs of any great city. The truth is that the Papuan native in these days scarcely ever attacks white men, and certainly never does so in the plantation districts. They do not mean him harm, he knows; they have not taken away his land; they employ him at times on the plantation, and pay him and feed him well for his work; they give him tobacco for his fruit and vegetables when he wants to trade—why should he destroy the goose that lays these golden eggs? It is true that he keeps up his old habits of murder and man-eating on the sly, but he gracefully conceals these little failings from the whites as far as possible, fearing, like Martin Chuzzlewit's American Colonel, "to awaken their prejudice."

It is perfectly true that the country about us and at

the back was fairly reeking with murder at the time ; and it is also true that the murders were so inexpressibly humorous that no one could have heard of them without laughing—which sounds heartless, but is nevertheless a fact.

Example : A and B, two fine young men from a mountain village, were walking along the banks of the Laloki, when they came upon a third, a man who was rather ill, and asked their help to get across the river. They did not feel inclined to give it, because the invalid would probably have bothered them all the rest of the way to their destination. But they did not feel inclined to leave him planted there either. So one of them put his head under water and the other held his legs till he was drowned. After which they continued the walk.

Example 2 : C, D, E, and F were out for a happy day in the country. They came upon two men by themselves. C, D, E, and F murdered them and went on their way. When asked in court afterwards why they committed such a deed, they explained that “the two men looked so very cold and hungry !”

Example 3 : A young man killed his father. No cause apparent. The strong arm of the British Government took hold of him, and he was asked if he could “assign any reason for the rash act” before the passing of sentence. The native interpreter of the High Court replied, after putting the question to the prisoner (who did not seem to feel his position at all

acutely): "He says, Sir, that the old man **was not** much good to anybody."

In all these cases the murderers were imprisoned for several years.

If we had met any of the culprits (as no doubt we did meet and converse with others, undiscovered) we should have found them pleasant, well-mannered men, ready to trade for a bit of tobacco or act as guide to a village with the utmost amiability. Truly, Gilbert's enterprising burglar, who was so pleasant and sociable when not engaged actively in his profession, would have felt at home in Papua.

It must be understood, therefore, that I have no moving tales of personal peril to relate, in spite of the fact that we two women were left alone, among a population largely consisting of murderers, in the interior of savage New Guinea. We passed the fortnight of our stay very pleasantly and quietly. There was not so much opportunity for out-of-door excursions as one could have wished, since we were in the heart of the rainy season, and, in the mountains, that means at least half the day in the house. The mornings were exquisitely fine as a rule, displaying the perilous beauty of light and colour that, in every climate, inevitably suggests something too good to last. About noon the sky would cloud over, and punctually at one or thereabouts the mist-wreaths would begin their witches' dance against the dark green rampart of forest over against the house. In another quarter of an hour it would be raining as if



*Photo by W. Whitten.*

# NATIVE HOUSE SERVANTS

*To face page go.*



the Rona waterfall had been lifted into the sky above the valley and then let go. The red earth would run rivers, the young rubber trees would bend and droop beneath the deluge, the deep thatched eaves of the house would send down a continuous waterfall. If you looked closely at the leaves near the verandah, you would see under many a one some prudent butterfly clinging upside down, its great green or blue or golden wings clapped close together, so as to get the full benefit of the shelter. Most of the birds retired into the close-set labyrinth of the bamboo trunks, there to preen and chatter like a company of school-girls all the afternoon. The wonderful blue landscape framed in by the gap in the valley put on a veil of grey mist and disappeared. As for ourselves, I am constrained to admit that we generally lay down for a siesta, covered up with a warm cloak (what a delight it was to need it!) until it was time for afternoon coffee.

And what coffee it was! I had heard down in Port Moresby that the quality of the berries on the Astrolabe range was exceptionally good. This, however, had impressed me not at all, because I had learned by experience in many countries that every plantation in the world surpasses every other of the same kind in the quality of its products. But when Mrs. C. and I tasted the Astrolabe coffee . . .

Well, we knew no moderation after that. There was only a fortnight to enjoy in full something that we should never get again, and we lost no time. The



cook-boy's life was made a weariness to him by reason of the number of times he was called on to roast and shell handfuls of beans from the verandah, and the open fire in the little cookhouse outside was never without a tall tin pot "drawing" within reach of the warmth. It was certainly the very best coffee that I had ever tasted ; one could fancy it served by the dark-eyed houris to the faithful in a Mussulman's dream of Paradise. I was not surprised to hear that the guests at the Christmas house-parties sometimes held on that plantation suffer so much from want of sleep that they have all been found at once wandering helplessly among the coffee bushes at two o'clock in the morning, unable to rest ! Fine though it may be in flavour, this coffee is much stronger than a novice would suppose, and ten or twelve cups in a day is enough to upset the nerves of the strongest.

The reader who knows all about coffee will pardon a little digression here for the sake of his less favoured brethren.

Coffee is a rather small bush, not more than three or four feet high when well tended. It has dark varnished leaves very like those of the laurestinus. It flowers, in Papua, three or four times a year, for only a day or two at a time, the flowers being small, white, and exquisitely scented. Later, the branches are covered with small scarlet berries much like a cherry. The stone of the berry is the coffee "bean." Picking lasts as a rule from January to March, successive crops following each other closely on the trees. Each

plantation has its pulping-house, where the berries are separated from the "beans" by a simple machine which can be worked by a couple of men. This machine, in medium sizes, costs only about thirty pounds. The berries are poured into a hopper, through which, driven by a stream of water, they pass into a compartment which is partly blocked by a metal disc. This disc is covered with sharp projections, against which the berries are crushed as the handle of the machine is turned. The "bean" is thus pressed out of its succulent envelope, and separated into two lobes, covered with a gluey saccharine matter in which they are allowed to lie until a slight fermentation takes place, when they are washed in several waters and dried in large trays. The "parchment" or inner skin of the bean is not removed but allowed to remain; usually, the buyer of the coffee has it taken off by machinery of a more complicated and expensive kind than the pulping-machine.

As regards the prices obtainable, the coffee industry is severely handicapped by the Australian duty of threepence a pound (which will probably be removed before long), but even under these circumstances it has been made to pay. There is not a coffee plantation in Papua at the present date run on economical and businesslike lines. Nearly all the work is left to natives, who know only so much as a Papuan overseer, himself ignorant and careless, can teach them. Carriage, owing to the lack of roads, is very costly.

And yet the plantations somehow or other pay for their keep. The moral is obvious.

A small plantation of fifty acres or so should cost about £200 to clear and plant, and, if carefully looked after, should be run for about £350 to £450 a year, including £200 salary for a manager. Coffee, in the Astrolabe country, bears in two years, so the planter has not long to wait for his returns. About 5 to 7 cwt. an acre may be safely reckoned on, and this sells, in Port Moresby, for £60 a ton, or if graded by a machine that costs the planter about £100 to buy and set up, £90 a ton.

There is nothing in the growing and preparing of the coffee that any sensible man cannot manage for himself, with the aid of a few of the best and most recent handbooks. The native labour is not equal to that of Ceylon or Malaysia, being less intelligent and more expensive. It suffices for the purpose, however, and one must always remember that neither in Ceylon nor Malaysia can the planter obtain valuable estates for nothing.

The rains, even in the rainy season, generally clear off about sunset. Waked up by the afternoon coffee, we were usually ready to enjoy that wonderful display when it came, and six to half-past found us on the verandah looking out over the valley.

In Port Moresby the sunsets had been a marvellous riot of flaming jewel-like colours, shot through by a certain peculiar and very lovely blue that I never noticed in the sunsets of any other land. Up here

in this green cup of the hills they were quite different, but equally wonderful in their way. When the sun had sunk in an angry welter of red and copper, just before the dusk came on, the whole valley would fill up with a tide of translucent green as if the sea had suddenly submerged us under a thousand feet of clear salt water. This extraordinary afterglow lasted about a quarter of an hour, and then darkened down into night. With the first rising of the green tide burst forth in an unanimous chorus the evening cry of the crickets, like thousands of little whistles all sounding together, or like the escape-valves of a myriad of toy steam-engines—so loud that it was necessary to raise one's voice in speaking while the chorus lasted. It was of short duration. When the light went out the crickets ceased, and the frogs, who had been croaking and crying like strange birds from the river below all the time of the sunset, crept into their marshes and were silent. Outside the stage, I never imagined anything so completely Wagnerian in my life. Light, sound, *mise-en-scène*, were all the spirit of the Nibelungen Ring. And if the wild dance of the mist-maidens across the dark hill-sides early in the afternoons was not a Valkyrie-Ride, or the very next thing to it, then no natural phenomenon ever suggested an idea to a poet since time and poets began.

One cannot recommend the Astrolabe country as a suitable residence for the aged or the infirm. It is almost entirely made up of hills. When you leave

the bungalow door you plunge down a descent as steep as a waterfall or crawl up a height like a sharply sloped roof, reversing the process when you return. This is supposed to be very good for the coffee. It is also good for the planters' muscles, without doubt. One begins, after a little of this sort of exercise, to understand why the native of the high mountain ranges is said to be unable to walk when he comes down to the flat for the first time. It is a fact that the mountain tribes do seem to suffer a little when travelling on the flat, until they get accustomed to it, and that they step "high and disposedly," like Queen Elizabeth when she danced, until they learn to alter their mode of walking.

The weather was so wet in the afternoons, and all the tracks were in such a state of bog, that we could not go about the country as much as we wished, and had to amuse ourselves watching the small operations of the plantation. The coffee of the last two pickings was being seasoned and dried in the sun. This needed constant watchfulness on the part of the native workers, to seize and carry under the house all the huge trays with which the backyard was spread as soon as the sky became overcast, and to carry them out again as soon as a gleam of sun appeared. Weeding was always going on among the trees, and at the picking season there was no doubt a good deal of stir, if one had been there to see. But, on the whole, the work of the place went forward so quietly that one scarce noticed it at all.

One of the chief events of the day was to see what our nearest neighbour's shooting-boy would bring in. His employer kindly shared the game with us, as there was generally more than he needed, and we had no means of obtaining fresh meat for ourselves. When the big Papuan appeared below the verandah, shaking the rain out of his huge mop of hair like a water-dog, and dripping little rivers from every curve and corner of his naked brown body, it was as good as a dip into a lucky-bag to see him open his netted string sack and spill out its contents. Pea-green parrots with yellow wings—parrots blue and grey and crimson—parrots almost all white; pigeons with iridescent breasts—great hornbills as large as a turkey, with incredible bills that looked like masks put on for fun; Gaura pigeons (a true pigeon as big as a goose, with clusters of beautiful grey aigrettes on its head), a plump young wallaby, a hind-quarter of wild pig; some indescribable bird that we had never heard of and could not identify—for what we knew, it might be a new species—but we ate it all the same; these were some of the things that used to appear on the verandah towards the sunset hour. I would have given a good deal for the company of that omniscient character who always makes one of a shipwrecked party in a book of adventure, and who can tell the sailors where to look for edible nuts and roots, and what fruits are poisonous, and the Latin name, personal habits, and domestic history of every bird, beast, and reptile

that the exceedingly miscellaneous desert island contains. He might have saved us more than once, if all the truth were known, from the hideous disgrace of making a dinner off some bird that a hundred scientific swords would have leaped from their scabbards to defend had the orgy taken place within hail of civilisation.

Within the last few months the beautiful Gaura pigeon, all the birds of paradise, and one or two other species, have been placed under legal protection. At the time of my visit this was not the case, and we might have plumed ourselves from head to foot with bird of paradise tails had we wanted. It was only a little while since a nest of these beautiful creatures had been found in the midst of the bamboo clump at the back of the house, and the bush all round seemed to be full of the "Raggiana"—the commonest kind—although I only once saw a bird. Their cry was unmistakable, a harsh and rather ugly call that one was sure to hear two or three times a day. I was always on the look out for them, like everyone who goes to New Guinea, and always being disappointed. The comet-like flash of a long orange tail across the track, one day when I was riding through the hills, was all I actually saw of these famous birds. I do not fancy the fault was mine, as almost every traveller has the same tale to tell, unless his journeying has been undertaken with the object of collecting birds. In that case a camp is made in the best-known haunts and the whole day given up

to searching and snaring. Even so, the hunters may be days without catching a glimpse of anything remarkable.

It was tantalising to know that Raggianas, Gaura pigeons, the beautiful black-velvet rifle-bird, possibly a "magnificent" or two, with their incredibly long tail feathers, and other rare and lovely species, were close beside us in the bush all day, and yet never to see one. The extraordinary bird noises that sounded night and day out of the forest were, however, some consolation. Birds in New Guinea laugh, chatter, curse, ring bells, saw wood, make all kinds of noises except one—singing. The butcher bird has a pretty note in the early mornings, not unlike the English blackbird, and there is a small black and white creature closely resembling a Willie Wagtail, that chirps very sweetly. But for the most part the birds devote their energies to the most amazing clowneries. The leather-neck—an ugly dark-coloured creature, not at all shy—scolds and carps in companies high up in the trees, exactly like a party of quarrelsome old washerwomen. The bell-bird sounds a clear tink-tink from the unseen depths of the bush, so like the bell of a pack-horse that it is often hard to distinguish the two. There is a pheasant that makes a noise exactly imitating the glug-glug of water being poured out of a narrow-necked bottle, even to the sudden rush at the end. Another chops wood all night long, like a goblin forester. Another cracks a loud cart-whip continually. Yet another saws and planes indus-



triously in an unseen recess of the liana-tangled trees. The cockatoos scream in a note that is the very acme of shrewish indignation when the tread of a horse or the pad of a human foot sounds in the solitary gorges that they love to keep to themselves. The crows laugh hideously ; the parrots chuckle and squeal ; the bird of paradise—I am sorry to have to say it, but it is true—simply squawks. One hears little of all this chorus while on the road, but at night or in the early morning, if one is camped near the bush, the noises are strange enough to send a “ new chum ” almost out of his mind.

Many of the most beautiful birds are only to be met with above a certain height. The blue bird of paradise is not found below the five-thousand-foot point, and the “ magnificent ” also prefers the higher ranges. Now that protective legislation has been introduced there is no danger of these wonderful and beautiful birds becoming extinct ; but before the laws that forbid the exportation of birds were passed, so many thousands were sent away each year that there was every reason to fear rapid extermination.

In German and Dutch New Guinea birds of paradise are not protected, and the supply is still kept up to the European markets from these sources. It is probable that along the boundaries between the three countries there will be a good deal of migration later on when the birds have been hunted up to the dividing line, and that Papua will eventually become a refuge for the whole tribe of birds of paradise.

I might write a good deal about these birds—about their exquisite plumage, the dancing-grounds which they clear for themselves beneath the high trees so that they can display their beauty and grace before each other in wonderful evolutions of stepping and springing; the many different varieties that are found in various places; but that I feel myself restrained by the drawback of utter ignorance. I have read a good deal about birds of paradise, as anyone in England may. I wanted to see them, but I did not succeed in doing so except in the instance mentioned above. Not one in ten of the white inhabitants of Papua ever does see a bird of paradise alive, and not one in a hundred out of the thousand or so of whites has been fortunate enough to see the dancing-grounds. How many Englishmen have seen a reed-warbler at home? How many could produce a kingfisher at short notice for the pleasure of a curious guest?

With some diffidence—since it is disturbing to find oneself in opposition to writers of standing and celebrity—I would here offer the opinion that books of travel are all the better, though possibly the narrower, when the writer confines himself to his own personal knowledge and experience as far as possible. It is easy enough and showy enough to make a handsome volume out of one's own experiences padded out with the doings and sayings of as many others as possible; to add flounces of borrowed history, geography, ethnology, and philology on to the meagre robe of the traveller's personal observations and

thoughts—in fine, to make a “work” out of a mere book by processes familiar to every reader and reviewer. The result, however, is in most cases the destruction of any little independent value that the book may possess. If one is not qualified for the task of unravelling the complications of Papuan race and language, for trained observation of scientific or zoologic phenomena, for the collecting of folk-lore and noting of native customs, one may regret the deficiency, and may even, in the midst of such a wonderful field as Papua, deplore the unfortunate tendency of Providence to “send walnuts to those who have no teeth,” but it is best not to try and remedy the evil. Every traveller has his own point of view : let him use it for what it is worth. There are quite as many readers desirous of knowing how white people live in New Guinea, how one gets about the country, what adventures one meets with, what money can be made in Australia’s new colony, as there are readers who wish to be enlightened on the question of how the original inhabitants got there or what form of stone celt has been longest in use. For the former alone I write. Not everybody can get to New Guinea, and the number of travellers who really see something of the country is still so small that each should offer what he can to the sum of general knowledge, poor though the offering may be.

There are always collectors in Papua—Baron Rothschild’s employés, men sent out by the governing bodies of scientific institutions, private workers.

The country is famous among entomologists for the number of new species of insects that it produces, and bird-collectors rarely go away without something hitherto unknown to add to the science of ornithology. It costs a good many hundred pounds to fit out even the smallest of these expeditions, and the larger ones run into thousands. They can hardly "pay" from the commercial point of view, even though the value of the new finds is very large. No doubt they are not expected to do so. It is the planter, the prospector, the leisurely traveller, who could make money out of Papua's rarities, animal and vegetable, if he only had knowledge enough to turn to account all that he sees. He never has the knowledge, however; like myself, he passes the pale wreaths of orchids in the forests and wonders if the bloom is a well-known species worth a shilling, or something new worth its weight in diamonds, and can't guess, and leaves it there. Or he catches a brilliant butterfly in the net the plantation hands use for crayfish-hunting in the river, admires it, sees that it has a body as big as his own finger, which will have to be stuffed if he wants to preserve the creature, and lets it go. A week after he meets a Rothschild collector, who shows him a big green butterfly with a fat body, and says casually that it is a new kind and worth fifty pounds. He recognises the insect, and spends the next week looking out for another—that fifty pounds would buy him two more horses—but it never comes back again. Or he meets a bird-hunting

party coming down from the high ranges and sees them rejoice immoderately over a couple of small finches and a minute lory among the big brilliant birds of their catch. These small specimens are absolutely new, they say, and heaven only knows what the men of science will not say they prove or disprove—in any case, there will be a dozen purchasers ready to weigh those tiny bodies against ten-pound notes by and by. . . . The planter, who perhaps has begun his place on a too limited capital, and is sadly cramped in consequence, wonders what the clouds of birds that come picking among his coffee or hemp for insects may be worth, if a man could only tell which were the specimens that science had caught and branded, and which, in the language of the cattle-station, were still “clean-skins.” There might be the worth of a shed full of new machinery in the carcase of any one of those screaming little nuisances. . . .

A good book or two on orchids, on butterflies, on tropic birds, with plates, would be a valuable investment for many a plantation, apart altogether from the interest that it would lend to the surroundings of the planter's life.

What with butterfly chasing, short but dirty rambles, swimming in a river guaranteed to be free from crocodiles, but certainly infested with leeches—reading, loafing, and watching the work of the plantation, a week or more passed quickly. On an evening that was rather less wet than usual we heard the distant

jangle of pack-horse bells, and knew that our escort had returned. Next morning we made a start for Warirata, some seventeen miles away, where we were to spend the night.

A thousand feet we mounted during the day, the air growing cooler and brighter mile by mile, the wonderful great gorges and valleys spreading out ever wider and wider below the narrow ridges on which we climbed along. The clouds gathered under us in rolling seas, though we were less than three thousand feet up; they rose and drifted and danced, long and ghost-like, upon the dark sappy green of the opposite hills, and at last they wrapped us altogether round, and burst upon us in cataracts of heavy mountain rain. Up something that might have been a road, and might have been a river, but was an unsatisfactory sample of either—because you couldn't swim in it, nor could you walk along it comfortably—we led our sliding horses, and slid and slipped ourselves, until in the dark we came upon the lights of the little plantation house at Warirata, and knew we were going to be clean and dry and fed again before very long.

If one wants to travel in New Guinea one must not mind getting dirty, both frequently and excessively. We did not mind, nor did our hosts, the plantation manager and his wife, object to the incursion of three exceedingly wet and miry creatures into their sitting-room. Nobody does mind "clean dirt" in the Territory; you are sure to want hanging

out over a line whenever you come in after a ride or a walk. Our swags, great sacks of painted canvas, were taken off the pack-horses; we retired and tidied up; and then came supper. One never knows how welcome supper can be until one has climbed a mountain to get it and been wet through in the process.

The little estate of Warirata was, like the last we had visited, planted with coffee. Like almost every plantation in New Guinea, it was insufficiently financed, and I fear me it did not bring in much profit to anyone. If it did not bring profit, however, it certainly brought pleasure to very many, for of all the beautiful places to be found in the Astrolabe range there is not one that comes up to Warirata for sheer loveliness.

The house itself was scarcely beautiful, being of the popular tin-roofed colonial type, with walls of some sort of composition that resembled very thick paper. It was the surroundings that gave the estate its real attraction, and brought party after party of visitors up from Port Moresby to see it, in spite of the twenty miles of bad road that lay between. From the front of the verandah we could see the whole magnificent thirteen thousand feet of Mount Victoria scaling up into heaven, range after range, step after step, in a colossal flight of skyward-sweeping stairs. It looked as if one could get to the top in a couple of days, or three at most, taking things easy and camping at night. As a matter of fact, the

great mountain was so far away and approached by so many dividing foot-hills that three weeks would have been good time. Mount Victoria has been ascended more than once, and is fairly well known. Practically all climates, from torrid to frigid, are found upon its slopes. It is below the perpetual snow line, but snow falls occasionally upon the upper peaks, and the smaller streams are constantly coated with ice.

The whole peak is not visible during the day, as a rule. Like most New Guinea peaks, Mount Victoria is veiled in mist during the greater part of the forenoon and afternoon. Only in the early morning is the whole mountain to be seen. It is well worth getting up for.

A couple of hundred yards away, on the other side of the house, there was yet another wonderful prospect. One followed the crest of the hill to its very edge, and there, where the mountain range broke off into a sharp descent of a thousand feet or more, with another eighteen hundred sloping away below, one could see across twenty miles of country, spread out small and fine like a map, with silver threads of rivers winding across it, and distant forests close set as fur upon the limbs of the giant hills. Beyond this wide extent of flat, the sea seemed to rise up high in the air, delicate and blue and finely wrinkled, set with one or two large pale islands, and edged by a waving coastline that trended gradually away to the south-eastward. Port Moresby lay hidden behind a hill, but the road



leading to it was plainly visible for the greater part of the way.

The air on this high plateau was quite cold in the morning and at night, warm during the day, but not oppressively hot. As it was then the middle of the hot and rainy season, the difference between Warirata and Port Moresby was all the more noticeable. We had left decidedly oppressive weather—hot nights without a breath of air, still steamy days—in the plains below. Less than three thousand feet had made all this difference, and we were within a day's ride of the port.

At the time of my visit it was supposed that Warirata would eventually be used as a Government Sanatorium, but a rival site was fixed upon not long after on the summit of Hombron Bluff, a mountain rather nearer to Port Moresby. By the time these lines are in print it is probable that the Hombron Bluff station will be completed, and that any resident of Port Moresby will be able to enjoy a Saturday to Monday in the cool mountain climate after an easy half-day's journey.

There was a price to pay for that beautiful view, and we found it out when we started off down the Port Moresby track. As a general rule beautiful views do have to be paid for, but one always forgets that part of it when admiring the picture. Still, even if we had remembered, we should have said it was worth while.

Everywhere in Papua one is confronted with the

tantalisng certainty that the absolutely unknown lies close to one's track. Up here in Warirata, which has been a favourite resort with Port Moresby people for more than twenty years, the unexplored lands lie under one's very eye. This tall, blue mountain seemingly less than a day's march away, has never been ascended. That whole extent of wave-tossed green, like a stormy sea turned to hill and forest, is the beginning of a great stretch unknown as yet to the white man. There, in that mere patch of bush, lying some miles below, one of the smartest bushmen in Papua was lost with his carriers for days, and had to make a rush back for the coast, depending solely on the guns for food. Go a couple of days' travel in almost any direction you may mention and you strike into country where no one has ever been. It is fascinating, and maddening, too. Why cannot one take a rifle and a couple of carriers and a few days' food and plunge down at once into the mysterious untrodden districts that look so near? Why does not someone go?

Well, after even a few days' travel on the well-known tracks one has a glimmering of the barriers that block up unknown ways. The inland districts are simply a series of precipitous ridges, or rather wedges, that succeed one another without a yard of flat ground. Mountain tribesmen brought down to the coast often find themselves unable to walk with comfort for weeks, as they have never set foot on any level ground. This sort of surface makes progress

inconceivably slow, and, further, the jungle off the tracks is so dense that all the way must be hacked out with axes and tomahawks. Generally no food can be obtained save what is carried by the men. If the carriers desert, as they often do, the explorer is left to play skipping-rope with the scythe of Death, and get back to the world of white men again in time if he can.

Stanley's journey to Central Africa was a mere picnic-party compared with the lot of the New Guinea explorer. There have been a good many such from time to time. More Governments than one have spent money on the country. Private capitalists of a scientific turn have sent armed and provisioned columns into the mysterious island-continent, and still you cannot sail an hour along the coast or travel a day into the interior without coming in sight of untouched lands. Papua keeps her secrets well.

For all that, there is, and has been for many years, a very large extent of safe, known, and accessible country available for settlement. In a country twice as large as England there is room for a good deal of unexplored land, and its existence does not trouble the settler, who knows all about his own little estate, and has no need to occupy himself with what may lie beyond.

We started for port early in the morning. About seven o'clock a disciple of G. P. R. James "might have observed three travellers on horseback making their way down the narrow and winding track that leads

from the wild and romantic regions of the Astrolabe range to the little town of Port Moresby." He might also have observed that the travellers were only moderately clean in appearance, and that they further defied the dramatic unities of the situation by hanging their steeds over with pannikins, billys, baskets, bundles, lanterns, and even bottles. One fears that they would have made but a poor impression at the inevitable inn of early Victorian romance. However, we were so far behind the early Victoria here—being, in point of fact, somewhere in the Middle Ages—that there was not such a thing as a roadside inn to be anticipated in the length and breadth of the Territory.

Inside of half an hour the procession had (as is usual in the mountains) resolved itself into its primary constituents, and three human beings were sliding and scrambling after three horses down a scratch in the mountain-side that might have been taken for a drain or an earthquake crack or a giant flight of stairs in exceedingly bad repair—for anything you like, in fact, except what it was—a track. The hopping and slipping and climbing and crashing through long grass and bushes, and going up nasty rises that all too visibly dropped down again within the next two hundred yards, went on for over an hour, and then, just as we were preparing to mount and reap the reward of our hard work in an easy canter along the level, came an urgent messenger from a copper mine, far above our heads, begging us to come up and stay for lunch. . . .

One almost wanted wings to get to the top of the

pyramidical hill on which was perched the miners' camp. But once up, there was a brilliant view of the Laloki Valley, and a fresh, cool wind blowing through the little bird-cage hut, and plenty of tea. So we stopped, as invited, and I had my first view of a miners' camp.

I do not know just what I had expected—something like Bret Harte's early Californian stories possibly, or else something that recalled the exciting tales told of Australian mining fields in the early days of a rush. Whatever I expected, however, it was not what I saw. Papua always presents one with the unexpected. I had before this been almost painfully impressed with the rigid respectability of Port Moresby, as compared with the lawless lotus lands of the true South Seas, but it had not prepared me for the miners' camp of the Astrolabe ranges in the latter end of 1907.

There were at that time only three claims in this particular valley—all copper, and all, it is said, exceptionally rich. That which I saw belonged to a couple of young retired Government officials, both gentlemen, and excellently educated and mannered, in spite of their rough miner dress. Their hut was only a hut, but it was clean and tidy. Their "boy" served lunch much as it is served in Sydney, and we all talked "Shakespeare and the musical glasses," afterwards looking down over the lonely Laloki Valley to where the unknown countries and the undiscovered mineral riches lie waiting for the pioneer.

. . . Next to the safety of Papua, its respectability is certainly the dominant feature.

I shall have more to say about these mines later on.

At the time of my visit there was little to see, and we were in a hurry to get on our road again. Some months later a considerable development of the Astrolabe field took place, and the mines are now in a fair way to prove themselves a paying property.

After that one headlong descent, the rest of the twenty miles was easy going. The last seven were along a real carriage road, which so excited the horses that they promptly bolted, and the last of the way home resolved itself into a series of races, not a little astonishing when one considered how much our steeds had done. But the New Guinea horse, like many other things in this astonishing country, is a good deal better than he looks.

## CHAPTER IV

The simple savage and his simple life—Off to the Purari River—A day aground—Western war canoes—The town of the devil-temples—“Pig!”—Plantation recruiting—The secret of the Rabi—Into the innermost chamber—What is it?—Lost in the delta—The praying of the Mantis—The light that failed—Iai, the place to spend a happy day—“Thalatta!”

HAVING seen something of plantation life (I was to see much more afterwards), the labour question naturally became interesting to me. A good deal depends upon names and terms in the matter of “interest.” The “problem of the labour supply of Papua” sounds like something extremely dry; but it is likely to awake an interest little short of passionate in the breast of anyone who really understands the conditions of Papuan life. For it is certain that the whole future of the colony turns on the question of whether the native supply of workers is sufficient to keep the plantations, present and future, in going order, or whether it is not.

The native population of the colony is large—about three-quarters of a million by the latest estimates. In some districts the natives have made a habit of engaging themselves for plantation or carrying work, and a supply is always to be depended on. In other parts of the country—especially those not

fully opened up—the idea of working for wages has never entered the native's mind ; he knows nothing of the white man or his ways, and does not even understand the nature of money. Other districts still are in a stage of transition. Now and then a shipload of young men goes away to the plantations, returning in a year or in three years to their village life—possibly to stay at home for good, possibly to go back to work after a year or so. On the whole, the supply of workers keeps up satisfactorily, and I have never seen a plantation that was short of labour, although I have heard a good many melancholy prophecies as to what may happen in the future.

It is hard, in these primitive places of the earth, to believe that the admirers of the gentle savage in his natural state, the passionate advocates of the "simple life" for black and white alike, whom one meets so constantly at home, can be genuine in their belated Rousseauism of idea—can really think that it is a wrong against the savage to take him out of his natural state and introduce him to new wants and new aspirations. The truth is that these city-bred sentimentalists, who are so ready to discourse upon the natural man and his virtues, do not know what they are talking about. They are like the much-quoted German philosopher who first evolved the idea of a camel out of his inner consciousness of what a camel ought to be, and then lectured upon the natural history of camels in general. The natural man, to take the definition that seems generally



accepted by the sentimental-crank school, is stronger and healthier than his civilised brother. He is full of a simple generosity and a supernatural innocence. He has no work to do, and is the better for it. The generous earth provides him with food unasked. He understands "herbs and simples," and possesses medical secrets unknown to the College of Physicians. He loves fresh air and pure water, and feeds by preference on fruits and the inevitable herbs, with which all primitive virtue is inextricably bound up in the mind of the simple-lifer. (One would like to ask the simple-lifer for his definition of herbs ; I have never yet met with one who could go beyond the bunches of dried flavourings that may be seen hung to the ceiling of cottage kitchens.) He has keener sight and hearing than any civilised person. He will give you everything he has and want nothing in return. He spends his time in innocent sports with his pleasing wife and charming children, and is in every way a worthier person than yourself—"instead of which" you go about trying to make him drink gin and use fountain pens. . . .

Alas for the coldness of the cold truth concerning the natural man !

There never was in any country or state of society known to history such a savage as that pictured by the simple-lifer. A few uncivilised races—very few—have a finer physique than the ordinary white man ; the Zulu or the Samoan, for example. No savage race in the mass is equal to the white race in pluck

and endurance. No single savage but can be matched and surpassed by some white in any feat of strength or agility he may perform. As for the sentimental side, most savages require a full return, direct or indirect, for anything they give, and all will take everything they can get. It is a mistake to suppose that any uncivilised man has no work to do—the mere defence of his village in a savage state entails heavy labour in the building of war canoes, making of stockades, manufacturing all sorts of weapons. Game, moreover, must be hunted and houses built and kept in repair. The generous earth does not grow his food for nothing. Yams, taro, manioc, and other nourishing roots require more cultivation than potatoes or cabbages. Of really wild fruit there is little in any country; and cultivated fruits require care. His knowledge of herbs passes over nineteen-twentieths of the useful plants of his country, and only includes the remaining fraction because some of them are good to eat or to paint your face with, and others to poison your enemy. His medicine is sorcery pure and simple. He shuts out every breath of air from his hut if he can manage to do so, and washes only when he is caught out in the rain. He eats roots out of his garden when he cannot get meat, and meat when he cannot get superfluous aunt or undesirable neighbour. He sees and hears things in the bush which a new chum misses, but his eyes and ears, tried by medical tests, are no better than those of the white man. His life is a tissue of murder,

fraud, and oppression, and his pleasing wife (one of a large number, regular and irregular) never enjoys a moment's pleasure, amusement, or peace during the whole of her miserable life if he can help it. As for the "health of the primitive savage," it is at best not much to boast of. Primitive man grows up at fourteen, is middle-aged at twenty-eight, and usually dies before fifty. He takes everything that is going in the way of disease, and takes it very badly. In spite of the fact that he lives without clothes, he is liable to bad colds. He suffers from some skin disease, usually repulsive, in three or four cases out of ten; he gets tumours and cancers, and dies of them, just as if he were a City grocer, and he can even show you some very pretty cases of hypochondria and hysteria if you like to look for them.

Such is primitive man, in almost all uncivilised countries. Such he is in Papua; and it is from this simplicity of existence that the plantation owner lures him away, to corrupt him with the complexities of civilisation, give him good wages and regular meals, provide him with a blanket and mosquito-net for the night, and a calico loin-cloth for the day, teach him to wash himself and keep his hands off other people's goods, and give him the habit of regular and steady work.

If the planter is not a missionary, and one of the best kind, then the name of missionary has no meaning. As a matter of sober fact, he does a good deal more reclaiming and improving than all the missions



THE VILLAGE BEAUTY

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put together. In so doing he has benefited himself as well as the native. So has the missionary. But he gets all the credit, and the planter gets none.

If this is a digression, it is a necessary one. There are very many good people, at home and in Australia, who are quite certain that the native is wronged by those who wish to develop his mind and change his ways of living. I hope, by showing the real facts of the case, gathered on the spot, to convince them of their mistake.

Returning to the question of the supply of labour, there were, and still are, different opinions on that point. I heard every variety while in Port Moresby. Some laughed at the idea of any possible shortage. Others were convinced that most of the plantations would be "held up" for want of boys in less than a year. Others did not know. Others again were sure that they, or their special friends, would never want, because they had the invaluable knack of "getting on with natives" (a gift that I have noticed is claimed by most white men in tropical colonies, and equally denied by most to others); while they were certain A. and B. and C. would never be able to keep their places going, because no boy who knew them would stay with them.

When in doubt about any matter of fact it is an excellent rule to go and see for yourself. The classical example of Mr. Micawber, who wanted to embark in the Medway coal trade, and therefore made it a point to go and see the Medway, offered an excellent

example. I heard that the small steamer *Kia Ora* had been chartered by the Government to go up the Purari River and visit some of the little-known delta villages. The Purari delta is expected by all who know the country to be one of the most important, if not the most important, sources of supply in the future. It therefore became my clear duty to "go and see the Medway"—so I went.

The visit of the *Kia Ora* was certainly a happy chance. The Government steam-yacht *Merrie England* is too deep of draught to go up the rivers, and, in consequence, Government visits to the Purari had been few. On this occasion His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor was anxious to visit as much as possible of the delta, and so the small steamer, which only drew about seven feet, and was not more than eighty tons register, was to take the place of the official yacht. I was fortunate enough to be invited to join the Government party, and accepted very readily, as the west is still largely unbroken and little explored, and not at all the sort of place where an ordinary traveller could go about unescorted.

We travelled from Port Moresby in the *Merrie England*, and transferred to the *Kia Ora* off the mouth of the Purari. The distance was not so small as it looked, and it took two days' steaming to bring us into the gulf and up to the mouth of the river.

The Purari was only discovered in 1879. Before that date, so little was known of Western Papua that it seems to have been possible to overlook a river as

big as the Mississippi, and not even suspect it was somewhere in the neighbourhood. At the present date (June, 1909), the river still remains in great part unknown. Messrs. Mackay and Little, in the end of 1908, ascended it over one hundred miles further than Sir William McGregor had done in 1893, reaching a point where it divided into two main streams, about two hundred and seventy miles from the mouth. The river evidently extends for a great distance further back, but at the spot where the explorers halted it runs through a high, narrow, rocky gorge, and becomes impassable on account of the rapids thus created.

At the time of our visit, early in 1908, only one hundred and forty miles of the river were known, and the delta was practically not known at all. Two Government visits have since been paid to it, adding on each occasion something to the still very imperfect knowledge of the delta. It is about five hundred square miles in extent; the number of waterways can only be guessed at, and the population is very much a matter of guesswork also, as no one knows how many towns may lie concealed in the inner mazes of the great labyrinth of rivers.

The trip began unluckily. Steam launches had been up the river, but no one had ever tried to take a seventy-ton steamer in, and no one, in consequence, knew whether the *Kia Ora* could get over the bar or not. We reached the river mouth when the tide was nearly low, and boldly made the attempt. It failed.



The steamer, though drawing less than nine feet of water, stuck fast, and it became evident that we had at least got to spend the day where we were.

There is not perhaps in the whole world a more melancholy and depressing piece of scenery than the mouth of the Purari River on a dull, sunless, glaring day in the hot season. For miles and miles about the low dark green line of coast the sea is insipidly fresh and hideously yellow, with the tremendous outpour of river water. Steamers can fill their boilers with the water to a depth of several feet below the surface, and if no other drink were available, the Purari water, as it overlies the surface of the sea a mile or two out, would probably support human life. It is thick to look at; there is no transparency in the livid flood, and every ray of light is cast back into the sky as from a brazen mirror. The resulting glare is something indescribable. Hats, awnings, umbrellas, are of no use at all, for one lies between two surfaces, each almost as light as the other. One cannot take refuge in the cabins; they are appallingly hot. The thermometer in the wheel-house, which is comparatively a cool place, stands at something over a hundred. The shore is far away, and there is no coolness or shade in its low, dark-coloured flats. From the unseen river mouth huge dusky trunks and branches of trees come sweeping past the ship on their way out to sea, and, simultaneously, terrific shocks pass through her small steel

hull and shake the simmering brains of her luckless passengers to jelly.

"How those logs are knocking her about," says one wretched creature, lifting a languid head from a lounge that seems to float between two furnaces, but that is, at least, a degree cooler than the cabins. Everyone is more or less seasick with the hideous rolling and kicking of the helpless ship, so there is an appreciable pause before another unhappy being answers—

"That isn't the trees—it's the *Kia Ora* banging on the bottom!"

So it is, and so she does for all the rest of that endless morning. If a tree or two does strike her, no one could tell, until the rising tide begins to lift her from the bottom, and the banging and pitching ceased. In another hour or two we float off again, and now we are fairly started up the Purari, for here lies the opening of the river—one of the openings, that is—and the banks are beginning to narrow in at last.

In the life of the traveller—perhaps one of the happiest lives that Providence grants to man or woman—there are moments of pure delight that stand out through all the years, as mountain islands stand out from shining tropic seas. The first sight of a foreign town—the first day on a great ocean liner—the first morning in the tropics—can the gipsy whom the Red Gods call, and have called through life, ever forget the rare fragrance of those perfect

moments? The Red Gods are hard masters. They ask much, if they give much, and when they offer the "kingdoms of the earth, and the glory of them," they demand the full price asked of old worship, unmingled and complete. Nor life, nor death, nor love itself can stand before the power of the Red Gods of wandering when they call. Let a thousand and ten thousand gipsy hearts, scattered over "all the seas of all the world," make answer.

Yet they pay their wages. It is worth having lived to see some things that most men die without seeing. And a great tropic river is not among the least of these.

It is hard to say why the Purari, as one enters the lower reaches of the main channel, to forge slowly upwards against the tearing current, through a fever-smitten solitude, that is deathly in more senses than one, should be such a wonderful sight. An immense tea-coloured flood, fully half a mile wide, dotted with downward-skimming logs, on which the tall white cranes perch fearlessly—shut in by low swampy banks, closely set with dense jungly growth, bordered by stretch after stretch, acre after acre of the melancholy, drooping, lovely nipa palm, which stands with its root in the water and the mud, lifting a splendid crown of tall green plumes to the heavy heat-brooding sky—this is what one sees—no more. If there are strange birds in the untrodden miles of swamp land, they are shy of our little steamer and its beating screw, and do not leave their safe retreats. If there are alli-

gators—indeed, we know there are thousands—in the depths of that opaque, swift flood, that keeps its secrets so well—they never lift a snout or a paw as we pass by. Only the cockatoos, screaming as nothing but a cockatoo can scream, rise from the palms near the bank and rush far away inland, yelling wrath and indignation unspeakable.

It is, perhaps, the inner rather than the outer eye that sees the wonder of the place. These great rivers of the burning tropic world have a personality of their own—a personality that is strong, malign, treacherous; a force arrayed against the traveller, challenging him to pit his strength and his cunning against theirs, with death, in a hundred ugly forms, as the penalty of loss. More, there is, in some fashion hard to explain, but easy to feel, something of the spirit of every great river in every other. It is not only the Purari, second largest of the many huge unexplored rivers on the strange island-continent, that we are going up. It is the Congo, the mighty Amazon, the guarded, remote White Nile—all the long, mysterious rivers that in every age of the world have called to the spirit of adventure and the love of things unknown, lying deep in the heart of man. The name and the place may be different, but the soul is the same.

The afternoon wore on, and we slipped steadily up the river against the strong current, forced to keep in the middle by the smallness of our knowledge as to its depth. The great yellow flood was over half a

mile wide, in places fully ten miles inland. Here and there tall melancholy pandanus trees stood black and weird against the livid sky, and at rare intervals a few cocoanut palms lifted their plummy heads eighty feet above the water.

"Shows we're getting near a village," commented our captain. "There are never any cocoanuts, unless where the people have planted them."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when a loud yell tore the murky air, and round a bend of the river rushed three large canoes, each containing about twenty men, paddling at a rate of speed that was simply amazing. The men wore no clothes, but their taste in ornament was certainly striking. Every one of them had a magnificent feather headdress, worn like a halo, and made of paradise-bird tails, cassowary feathers, parrot feathers—all vividly coloured by nature in scarlet, pink, blue, green, orange, and snowy white. Necklaces of dogs' teeth adorned most of these warriors, and armlets of white shell, bands of scarlet leaves and green or white grasses, strings and strips of many-coloured bark, added to the general effect of full dress. The natural expression of these river gentry was wild and fierce enough, but they had further emphasised it, to the best of their ability, by painting nose, forehead, and cheeks in crimson stripes, and sticking a sort of white pencil or shell, with pointed ends, through the septum of the nose, so that the ornament projected on each side, and gave the wearer a singular resemblance to a tusked wild boar.

There were some spears in the boats ; there may have been arrows also, but no firearms, which, happily for the white resident, the Papuan does not possess.

Both then, and afterwards, I was much struck with the speed and skill of the Purari River paddlers. Their canoes are simply a large hollowed log, without any supporting outrigger, and a white man cannot keep his balance in one for a second, so insecure is its hold on the water. The natives, however, paddle them, standing up in the canoe, at a rate that would leave many a racing outrigger far behind. Their time is magnificent, and the sweep of the paddles, plunging in and out, and making the water fairly boil along the sides of the long light log, is a thing to remember for the rest of one's life.

The men in the canoes—sixty or thereabouts—greeted our appearance with yells of the wildest excitement, and at once began paddling their hardest to overtake the steamer—which, working against the fierce current right in the middle of the stream, they did in a few minutes. No steamer had ever been up here before, and very few boats ; the men hardly knew what our arrival might portend, and certainly did not understand the significance of the Union Jack flying at our masthead, to indicate His Excellency's presence on board. However, it was clear that they had no fears, for they did their best to catch up the ship, and having succeeded in doing so, took a tow with the utmost enjoyment. Thus we went on our way, accompanied by the yelling crowd of painted

cannibals, into Maipua, the first of the villages we meant to visit.

Even in Papua, the country of impossibilities, the sight of Maipua comes with a shock of amazement. The huge rabis—or men's living-houses and devil-temples in one, that stand out in inescapable prominence along both sides of the stream, perplex the mind with a mist of nightmare bewilderment. It is a curiously disturbing thing to come upon something so unlike every other object of its kind, that your mind has no simile to offer, no past experience upon which the new sensation may stand. The largest rabi in Maipua is fully ninety feet in height and four hundred in length. Its shape cannot be described otherwise than by suggesting that the idea may originally have come from the form of an alligator lying full length and open-jawed on the bank. The gable end, facing the river, runs up into an immense horn or point, the sides being rounded off in a sweep that shows considerable architectural skill. A small door gives access to the interior. In front of every rabi there is the usual Papuan verandah, built high up on posts, to protect the inhabitants of the house from wandering alligators.

Smaller houses, all built in the same style, stood along the bank, each house perched high on piles out of the swampy mud. The Maipuan lives in mud almost as much as an alligator, but he does not care to sleep in it. Logs of wood lie about the swampiest places, where the youth of the community might be

in danger of disappearing altogether, and the innumerable small creeks and inlets that seam the villages through and through have generally a crossway log, a moored canoe, or even a light, neat, well-made bridge to convey the native from one side to the other. As every Papuan of the coast districts can swim like a shark, the precaution is a significant one. Indeed, although we did not chance to see any, there is no doubt that these swampy places swarm with alligators. The piles of alligator skulls kept as trophies in the rabis would prove this if nothing else did.

Sometimes, it is evident, natives do brave the dangers of the river so far as to swim down it with the current, taking their chance of an encounter with the great grey monsters that lurk hidden in the slime. A Papuan did this some months before the time of our visit. He belonged to a tribe living some distance away, and when the people of Maipua saw his black, frizzy head making its way down the river they went out in their canoes to see who it might be. Finding he was a stranger, they picked him out of the river, and promptly ate him to teach him not to come trespassing in their waters.

A stroke of bad luck had knocked me over with temporary sickness, and I was not able to go ashore with the rest of the small party when we anchored in Maipua and the captain proceeded forth to do his recruiting. Lying on a lounge on deck, not a little feverish and with the mind in the tense, overstrung state that a high temperature brings, I watched the



strange sights about me and wondered whether it could possibly be real. The sky was still a sulky purple grey, the river gleamed like tarnished brass against a lowering sunset, the gigantic rabis stood up black and threatening. The party from the steamer could be seen ashore standing on the verandah of one of the houses and holding negotiations that seemed likely to last a long time with a group of feathered and painted Maipuans. In the stillness of the almost deserted ship one could hear from far away the deep, resounding boom of a native chant—a chant with something distinctly warlike in its tone : no cheerful song about the river or the fishing or the gardens, such as natives used to while away their idle hours all over the Pacific lands, but a loud, long yell, broken at regular intervals, coming nearer and nearer to the ship, and sounding stranger and fiercer as it approached. At last it came under the bows, and with it passed by a sight worth going many hundred miles to see.

Two great canoes had been lashed together and connected by a platform of canes and small timber. They were decorated with a perfect forest of fresh green palm leaves and other foliage, so that the whole structure looked like a floating garden drifting down the stream. On the canoes stood a score or two of natives, gorgeously painted and feathered, but otherwise absolutely unclad. Their feather headdresses quivered against the gloomy sky; their fierce dark faces, streaked with scarlet and tusked with the nose-



MAIN STREET OF NAIPUA

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shell, looked half beast-like, half devil-like as they chanted, open-mouthed and swaying, their loud, monotonous song. In the centre of the platform lay a trophy of some kind, so much decorated with leaves and grasses that it was impossible to say what it might be. I heard later that it was a newly-slaughtered pig, and saw no reason to doubt the fact; but it was clear, all the same, that pig was not invariably the centre of the ceremony.

In fact, I looked at the raft with peculiar interest, since it seemed very probable indeed, from the elaboration of the whole affair and the warlike demeanour of the men, that I was witnessing a cannibal ceremony minus the corpse. Natives have a way of substituting pig for man, much as an economical housewife would substitute margarine for butter on occasions when the superior article would prove too expensive. It certainly would have proved very expensive for the Maipuaans in this instance, and they doubtless knew the fact.

The people on the occasion of this visit were sullen and not inclined to be civil. Maipua, being low down in the delta, had been seen by a few white men, traders, and recruiters, but it was not very well disposed towards them. White visitors interfere with the simple sports of a native village (such as tying up a captured enemy over a fire and roasting him alive) and get in the way of tribal warfare; and Maipua at this time was scarcely awake to the fact that the white man possessed many things it was extremely desirable

to have. The people were not actively rude, but they followed our party about in silence, watching them closely with sullen stares, and kept the women out of sight—always a sign of hostility.

The captain of the steamer nevertheless was bent on recruiting some of the unmarried men for the eastern plantations, and laboured to that end with the utmost industry. He used to go into one of the large houses inhabited by young men and sit down for a smoke. By and by, through his interpreter, he would ask one of the men if he had any tobacco. The man would acknowledge rather shamefacedly that he was out of that essential. "Poor fellow!" the captain would say, "I'll give you some," and hand him over a few sticks. Then he remarked casually that the boys who worked on the plantations had an allowance of so many sticks a week. By and by he began again. "Got a tomahawk?" No, the man explained, there were only half a dozen in the town, and they were very valuable things indeed; he did not hope to possess one. "Got a calico?" (waist-cloth). No, the man hadn't that; he had only a garment of bark. By this time he was beginning to feel very low in his mind; but the relentless captain went on. "Got fish-hook?" No, the man did not own such a treasure, invaluable though it was to a river native. Then would come the crucial question, "Got a wife?" The Maipuan would nearly shed tears at this. How could a man without so much as a scrap of calico of his own afford to buy a wife?

"I tell you what," the captain would say, struck by a new and brilliant idea, "you come away with me and go to work for a year on the white men's plantations. You plant cocoanut, you cut down tree, all the same as you do here. You get plenty-plenty tucker, meat all the days, biscuit, rice, tea, plenty tobacco. By and by you go back Maipua, you take calico, fish-hooks, tomahawks, beads, knives; you big man; you buy wife."

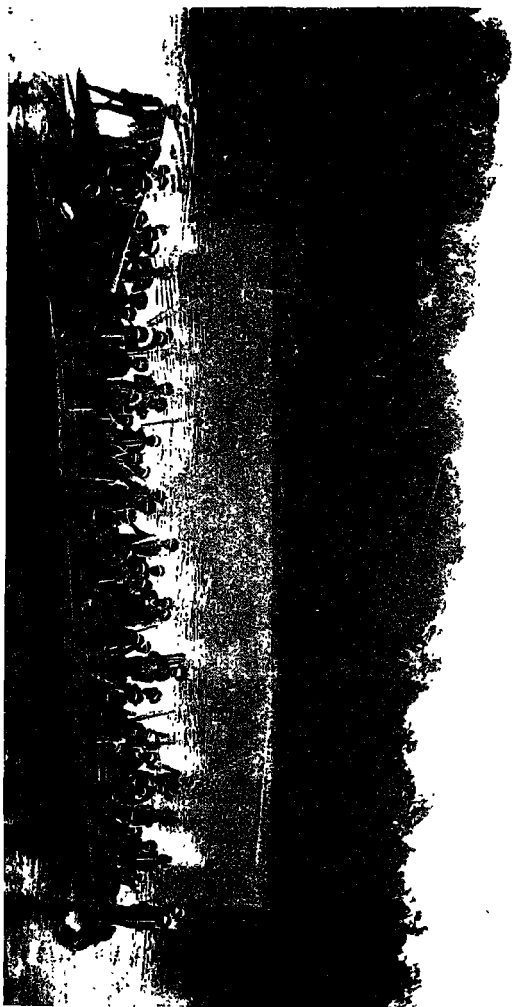
Money was not mentioned, as the Maipuan scarcely understands the value of coin, and prefers to think in concrete terms. The prospect proved attractive to a good many, and there was some animated talking among the young men. "How many moons till we get the goods?" was the next question. The captain had come prepared with a knotted string, which he produced. It had twelve knots, and each, he explained, represented a moon.

The matter stayed there till the next day, as we meant to stop overnight. Till morning we lay in mid-stream, separated by only a narrow channel of water from two thousand covetous and bloodthirsty savages, who valued the trade goods stored in our hold much as the crew of one of Drake's caravels would have valued the contents of a Spanish treasure ship on its way home from Eldorado—and who certainly would not have had the slightest scruple in spearing and eating every one of our little party of ten or eleven whites if they had only known that we were practically unarmed, and that the mysterious

smoke-breathing monster which had brought us to their town was no more to be feared than a whale-boat. But they did not know ; therein lay our safety.

Next morning the captain went ashore again with the rest of the whites. I was obliged to stay on board, being still on the sick-list. Lying on my lounge on deck, the ship very still, with only one or two of the crew left in charge, I took a photograph or two, and watched the canoes passing timorously up and down beside the steamer. They were not angels, these Purari folk, and they did not look angelic. None too lovely to begin with ; by the time they had painted and feathered themselves, thrust the hideous white tusk through their noses, and filled their mouths with chewed betel-nut, that looked exactly like blood, staining lips and teeth a hideous crimson, they were as devilish-looking a set of gentry as you might find in a year's wanderings.

The captain came on board later in the day with a score or two of Maipuans, half-scared, half-excited, but quite determined to go with the white men and earn the goods that were to make them so important in their village. Not one of these untamed savages but would have to be "signed on" by a magistrate, according to the laws of the country, before he could be set to work. It sounded a little absurd, but all the regulations of the Native Labour Ordinance have been framed with the view of preventing injustice between employer and employé, and they are



PURARI CANOE

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all based upon good reasons. The plantation hand in Papua knows before he signs his agreement just what he is doing, how long his engagement is to last (it cannot in any case be more than three years), what wages he is to get, and how and when he will reach his home again. The employer is obliged to feed him on a liberal scale, give him blanket, mosquito net, tinware for his food, and a proper house to sleep in. No employer or overseer is allowed to strike a boy in punishment of any neglect of duty—nor on any other occasion, unless in self-defence. Punishment on a plantation means deprivation of some luxury, a little extra work, or (if the labourer leaves before the end of his engagement) a compulsory visit to a magistrate, who will look into the matter, and if he is satisfied that there has been no just cause of complaint on the boy's part, will sentence him to a short term of imprisonment in jail.

Wages are usually ten shillings a month, and are paid at the end of the engagement. They must be handed to the labourer in the presence of a magistrate, and a minor official has to satisfy the magistrate and himself that the local store does not cheat the boy of any value for his money. In the Government offices are to be found huge piles of papers dealing with the purchases made by hundreds of boys at a time when being paid off. So many fish-hooks, so many strings of beads, so many tomahawks and knives, so many yards of calico, etc. etc.—even, in some cases, so many bars of soap! The Papuan is

usually much impressed with the wonderful powers of soap when he sees it for the first time, and is quite anxious to introduce it to the ignorant people who have remained at home in the village.

At the end of his engagement the employer has to return every man to his own home, even if it is four or five hundred miles away. This is undertaken at so much per head by the recruiting schooners, and is not a serious expense. If by any chance the native should have died during his engagement, the employer is obliged by law to send the amount of his wages, in cash or goods, to the man's relations in his native village.

A man who has once been on the plantations generally goes back again, sooner or later. He may be glad to see his own people for a while, and to sink down into the ways of savagery for a certain time. But the leaven of civilisation works. He has learned to want many things that he cannot have in his own cannibal village; he has acquired a taste for good and regular food and undisturbed sleep—two blessings that are not to be found in native villages—and he grows impatient with the tiresome stone axes and adzes, the tedious fish-spearing, the bamboo knives that will only make one cut before they have to be re-edged. After handling European tools for a year or more it is disconcerting to be dropped back into the Stone Age. And when you are accustomed to all the glories of red calico tunics, leather belts, and shirts to wear when the sea-breeze blows wet and

chilly, it is hard to go back to scraps of bark and tufts of leaves. The goods brought from the plantation are shared out all over the district, and do not last long. The labourer finds himself much where he was before long—only discontented, which he never used to be. . . . By and by the recruiter comes along again, and the first boy he gets is the very one who was so glad to get home a few months ago.

One might reasonably ask, Is there no risk to the planter in filling up his plantation with ferocious man-eaters miles and days away from the nearest white settlement? . . . I have said before that Papua is the country of the Impossible. This is another of its impossibilities. It is perfectly safe, as all experience proves. The Papuan cannibal, taken away from his own village, set to work in a district of which he knows nothing, among men who are largely strangers to him, seems to change his nature altogether for the time being. There are occasional fights among the plantation hands themselves, but nothing serious as a rule. Attacks on the white masters are practically unknown. It is hard to say why this is the case, while in the neighbouring Solomon Islands and in the New Hebrides the planter often runs serious risk from his men, but the fact is one that cannot be denied. Something is probably due to the excellent treatment of the labourer which the law enforces in the one case and merely assumes in the other, but this hardly accounts in full for the extraordinary fact that one white man can live alone

among five hundred natives, mostly cannibal, order them about, keep them hard at work, let them see that he is in possession of countless stores of the very treasures for which they are painfully labouring, and yet remain perfectly safe in their midst. The prestige of the Government and the fear of its displeasure are both alike strong in Papua, but that again is scarcely enough to account for the astonishing tameness of the man-eater away from his home. He is not tame in his home, and not friendly to the white either ; until within the last two years it was almost impossible for any white man to venture into the western river districts except at the imminent risk of his life ; and yet, at that very time, men who came from the hostile country made excellent workers. One must be content to "give it up," as one gives up many problems in this country of living riddles.

The men we took on board at Maipua and later amounted to over a hundred. The little ship was packed to overflowing with them. They might have risen any night and massacred the whole of the whites and looted the ship, but they did not, and we knew that they would not. I do not know why we knew. They might conceivably have attacked us on shore, when we should have been still more at their mercy—again, I do not know why. The amount of ignorance that I accumulated on that journey through the delta would fill three volumes, and I never ran out of it all the time I remained in the country afterwards.



THE BRIDGE THAT FAILED

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Next day we got away from Maipua. I had not seen anything on shore, not even the interior of one of the great rabis, but another visit, paid a year later, made up for the deprivation. On this occasion I went ashore with the Government party, who had come up from the *Merrie England* in a steam-launch, and saw the principal rabis. The change that had taken place during the course of the year was very notable. Instead of sulking sullenly apart and watching us with suspicion, the Maipuans rushed to meet the launch, helped us by the muddy river bank, seized any parcels we were carrying, insisted on relieving us of their weight, and shook hands with us by the score. When I broke through a rickety bridge and got covered with mud half a dozen man-eaters "ran to help me when I fell," pulled me out on to the dry land (what there was of it) and painstakingly cleaned my skirt with grass and water. The village was really transformed. Though still uncivilised in other ways, we heard that they had definitely given up cannibalism, and that they were rapidly learning the use of white men's tools. They made no objection to letting anyone enter the rabis, and, as I was most anxious to see one, I followed with the Government party along the river bank to the platform of one of the largest.

Walking about in a Purari delta village is not an easy performance. The whole town is built in the mud—black, thick, ill-smelling slime, half land and half water, cut up by numberless canals and streams



of all sizes. The houses, made of bark and sticks, are set upon high piles, and connected with each other by fallen logs laid across the worst of the quagmires, and by a nightmare kind of bridge constructed of fragile sticks, which are placed in careless handfuls upon tall, trembling supports eight or nine feet high. These structures have no handrail or guard of any kind, and if you fall off one when nobody is about you may very well be suffocated in the slime below. It is said—with how much truth I cannot tell—that many of the natives of the Purari delta can support themselves safely in this slime by a kind of half-swimming, half-paddling motion, and can even get about in it, like mud-turtles. We did not see anyone performing the feat; but no doubt the native prefers a bridge when it is to be had.

The outside platform of the rabi was very wide and very rickety indeed, and you could plainly see the black, deep mud below through the gaps between the twigs. Our booted and heavily-moving party (all white people seem to move heavily and slowly compared to the light-footed, naked natives) came very near breaking through once or twice, but we got safely to the entrance of the rabi and entered, one at least of the party full of excitement and anticipation.

Very little indeed has been known about these rabis in the past, and even on the occasion of our second visit we were sure that not twenty white men had seen before us what we were seeing that day. No

white woman had ever been inside the rabi, but there seemed to be no objection to my entering.

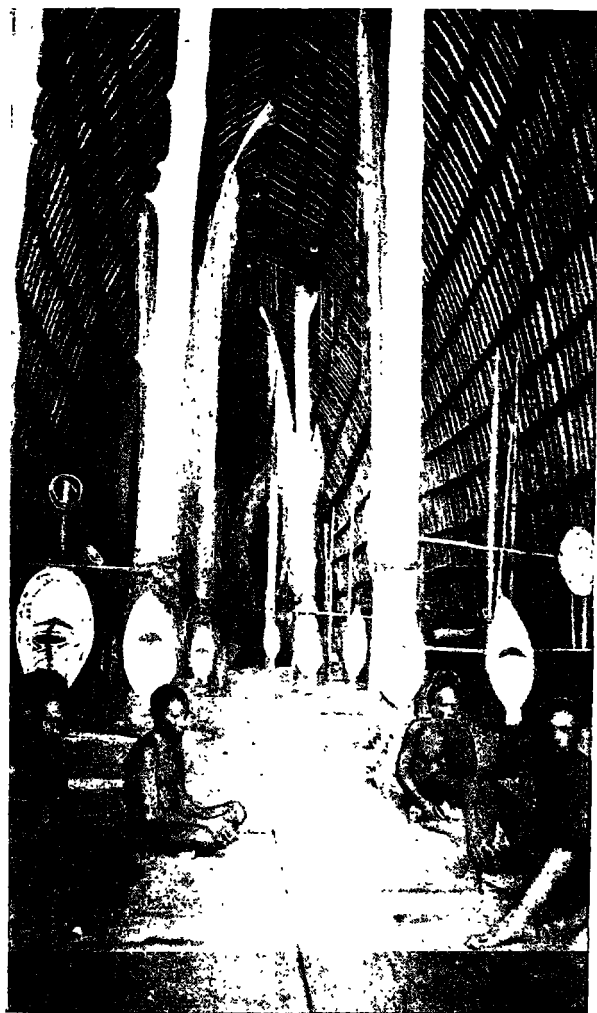
Coming out of the dull glare and heat outside, the dark coolness of the rabi made one draw a breath of relief. There is no heat in Papua like the black heat of the delta country—glaring yet gloomy sky; inky mud, warm as a witch's cauldron; palms and lianas bright with an unwholesomely vivid green, void of refreshment—it seems as if there were not a single spot upon which the eye could rest without strain. Under the huge arching roof of the rabi, however, there was a pleasant dark-brown light, and something like a breath of wind seemed to filter through the long arcade in front of us as we stood in the outermost division looking at the strange treasure of the Maipuan.

The photograph which I was fortunate enough to obtain on this occasion will give some idea of the extraordinary appearance of the building. It was partitioned off into four separate sanctuaries, the three first being divided from each other by rows of wooden pillars. The outermost was the largest and highest; as the building went back it became narrower and lower, and each division lessened accordingly. The first contained alligator skulls set in neat rows on the ground; pigs' jaws hung in strings down the pillars; wooden shields carved into representations of nightmare faces—faces crab-like, pig-like, devilish, boggy, goblin, comic, or fierce. The gargoyles of Notre Dame would seem banal compared with the

imagination of the Purari artist. I never saw anything like it, except in some of Aubrey Beardsley's drawings. Indeed, an artist of the decadent type would find himself thoroughly in sympathy with the Purari country in general. It is very much like the sort of thing an unusually morbid impressionist painter would create after a course of reading selected from Poe, De Quincey, and the once notorious *Yellow Book*.

Besides the shields there were a few spears—wood, with long barbed points—and a number of belts made of bark ; also some plaited baskets, evidently the property of the men who were lounging about on the floor of the first division. We knew that strings of human skulls generally decorated the posts of the rabi, as they had been seen on the occasion of the former visit ; but the Maipuan had evidently removed them when they heard the steam-launch coming, out of a well-bred reluctance to shock our feelings. Between the two visits there had been a punitive expedition into the delta to warn another tribe against chasing white men and threatening to eat them, and the manners of the various towns had undergone a wonderful improvement since then, although no one had been killed in punishment for the outrage. The Maipuan people, at all events, fully recognised the power of the Government, and were almost effusively anxious to curry favour with its representatives.

The second division of the rabi contained much



THE CANNIBAL TEMPLE

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the same things as the first, and so did the third, but in each division the treasures were larger and better selected—the alligator skulls bigger, the pig jaws more numerous, the shields and weapons handsomer. The fourth division we could not see into, as it was shut off by long drooping curtains of fine fibre ; but we approached it with extreme interest and curiosity. The whole rabi seemed designed with a view of gradually leading up to and enhancing something . . . what ?

We dived through the curtains, and saw.

We were standing in a little innermost room at the very end of the immense length and height of the rabi. Here the roof sloped down low, and the sun came in through the slats of the branchwork at the back. We could see the contents of the room quite clearly, and they were . . .

Four dragons !

Yes, it was certainly worth the elaborate preparation that led up to the surprise. Whatever one might guess as to the contents of that inner shrine—that Unholy of Unholies—one was not likely to have guessed dragons. And yet there they were, as large as life, and quite as unnatural as anything ever seen in the pictures of a tale-book about goblins and genii. They had a certain resemblance to alligators, a slight suggestion of shark ; but dragons they were in all essentials. They were made of plaited wickerwork, and seemed about nine feet long. They had tapering tails and small sprawling feet. They had large red

eyes, made of the rind of some fruit, and immense gaping mouths which could easily have engulfed a man. All in all, they were bogies of a very high class, and evidently held in awe as such, for only one man entered into the inner shrine with the whites to look upon them, and he had apparently an official connection of some kind with the mysteries of the rabi.

It is extremely difficult to get at the meaning or use of these images, as the natives are very shy of talking about them, and take refuge in obvious lies if too closely questioned. This much is known, that they are in use as oracles, being consulted before the natives go out to hunt. The Governor questioned our guide through an interpreter, and was told that the Ukiaravi tribe had consulted their images before going out to chase the white man some months before, and that the images told them they would have bad luck, but they had gone all the same. They themselves had always consulted these figures before going out to hunt wild pig, in order to know what success they would have. Of course they never hunted anything but pig; it was only the bad people of Ukiaravi who hunted men (self-righteously).

How did the images answer?

By tilting on their feet—so many raps for yes, so many for no, the guide informed us.

(Spirit-rapping of the good old pattern among the Purari cannibals!—*si je m'y attendais !*)

He told us further that when the men came home

from hunting with a load of pig they brought out the images on the platform in front of the rabi and offered the pig to them. That "excellent-substitute-for-the-real-article" idea occurred to me again. The Purari mind is transparent enough at some times, though at others dense and dark as the mud of the swamps that breed it.

We had heard dim rumours of other uses for the images—ceremonies in which a man, hidden inside the wicker body, feigned to devour the victim of a cannibal feast, stabbing him as he was put into the mouth of the figure. But questions about cannibal ceremonies may as well be left unasked, for it is impossible to get replies. All cannibals are shy and secretive about their anthropophagic practices, and take refuge from inquiry in blank innocence or the inevitable pig. The figures were evidently designed to hold a man, but when or for what purpose we could only guess.

A good deal impressed, we left the inner chamber and began the long walk back up the rabi to the platform. The floor was made of split palm sheaths, or something similar, and was very elastic, and not at all secure. The walls, however, were well built of small parallel branches and split logs, and the roof was sloped and narrowed with notable skill. Altogether the rabi was fully as remarkable inside as out, and that was saying much.

The life of a Purari village centres round the rabi, which seems to be used partly as a club, partly



as a devil-temple. The unmarried men all sleep in it, and spend much of their time in it. All the men of the town join in the ceremonies that take place there from time to time, but what these are no white man knows. Few whites have visited the district, and none have had an opportunity of unravelling the secrets of the rabi. The natives guard its privacy most jealously; Maipua is the only town where strangers have been willingly admitted into the interior of the building and shown the images, and even in Maipua the ceremonial side of the temples is kept rigidly secret. In Ukiaravi a rabi was destroyed by the Government to punish the natives for attempting an attack upon two harmless white traders, and the images were confiscated. I was therefore able to secure a photograph of two of these figures, taken at Port Moresby. They are quite unique as curios, since no other specimens have ever been obtained, and none could be obtained unless under similar circumstances. No village would sell its images for any money that could be offered.

In other parts of the Gulf of Papua there are buildings somewhat resembling these rabis, though less remarkable. The Resident Magistrates say that the rabi, in the coast towns, is really a sort of savage university, where the boys of the tribe are brought up, taught the use of weapons, and initiated into the ceremonies of the tribe by the old men. They spend several years undergoing this educational course. A man who has not undergone the rabi training is held

of small account by his fellows and finds difficulty in getting a wife. It is a curious point that children of illegitimate parentage are not admitted.

In all probability the Purari River rabi has much in common with these. The fiercer nature of the people, however, no doubt introduces more of the murderous and man-eating element into the ceremonies of the rabi than obtains along the open and better known districts of the coast.

We steamed away from Maipua on the occasion of our first visit with a large number of untamed savages, and made our way to Kairu—or tried to.

But in the Purari delta man proposes and the river channels do the disposing. Nobody really knows this marvellous tangle of great rivers, narrow deep channels, broad shallow creeks, sago swamps, and mangrove and nipa country, half land, half water. The chart is a mockery when you really want to find your way about. It is the most amazing piece of geography in the world. Your steamer butts her way solidly up against the current of a river the size of the Mississippi for half a dozen miles, takes a crosscut down a creek at right angles to her former course, and plunges out into another river about the size of the Upper Nile this time, running parallel to the last, and not a hundred yards from it. This is not the direction for our villages, however, so we take another crosscut and strike yet another great river nearly a quarter of a mile wide and four or five fathoms deep. It branches off by and by into two

large rivers, each big and deep enough to make the fortune of an Australian State. We choose a branch at random and proceed along it for the greater part of the day, the Papuan leadsman throwing the lead constantly as we go and calling out the depth, which is rather too variable to be safe. What a river! An unknown and unnamed branch of the great Purari, but yet a mighty flood, bearing along huge logs like straws, taking our 80-ton steamer in perfect safety, and showing here and there a depth of as much as seven fathoms. A wonderful but a melancholy place; a land where no man lives, where it seems that no man has come since the beginning of the world. Thirty, forty, fifty miles we must have gone, and nothing stirs on those green burning banks but the stalking crane, no sound but the harsh cry of the cockatoo breaks the deathly stillness of the dense, swamp-nourished bush. All the criminals of all the world might hide here and never fear discovery—an invading army might lose or conceal itself and never have its presence so much as suspected. Yet if the place is desolate, it is not barren. The endless groves of nipa palm bear eatable if not attractive fruits, and the sago palm lines the banks with veritable forests, each trunk a storehouse of food for a family during almost a year. Even the great population of the delta—a population which has never been more than guessed at because of the careful concealment of most village sites—cannot use one tithe of the supply of this most valuable food. No



MAKING SAGO

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one who has seen the river people—stout, muscular, well nourished, and fed from babyhood almost entirely on the starchy food washed from the inner pith of the sago palm—can doubt its value as a food.

Why has no attempt been made to use these forests of sago commercially? Difficulty of transport is the chief reason. They are “a long way from anywhere,” and white men could not live in the deadly swamps where the tree most flourishes. A good deal might be done by cutting along the outer edge of the bank, but, with so many other industries waiting to be exploited, the turn of the sago palm is not likely to come for a long day yet. Sago, prepared and cleaned, can be bought in large rolls in many parts of Papua at about a halfpenny a pound. It is not at all like the sago of the shops, either in appearance or flavour, being dark reddish-brown in colour and of a glutinous, jelly-like substance. Its nourishing qualities, however, for the old, the sick, and children are unrivalled.

We found Kairu, I do not know how, and I am sure the captain did not know how himself. It was certainly worth finding. Though not so imposing as Maipua, it was far prettier. The houses of Kairu are built more in the water than in the mud, and overhang the deep green river in quite a Venetian manner. There were many little side canals running in and out among the houses, with wickerwork verandahs looking down upon them and trails of leafy liana netted across their cool arcades. There were bridges, too, of

a better pattern than the Maipuan type, crossing these narrow rivers—in fact, the whole town (a large one, with a population running into thousands) may fairly be described as the Venice of the Purari.

It gave one's mind the disconcerting kind of jolt with which one becomes so familiar in Papua to observe in the middle of this poetic prettiness of architecture a solemn row of cannibals sitting on the front verandah of every large house. They were very much painted and feathered and very little dressed; they were as immovable as stone, and apparently took no interest at all in the unheard-of phenomenon of a steamer. We judged them to be sentries of some kind—not an unnecessary precaution in this part of Papua.

Here we got twenty or thirty men, and some bundles of sago, and in the afternoon proceeded twenty parasangs—I beg the reader's pardon—we left Kairu and went a few miles down the nearest river, and then got lost again, trying up wrong creeks and rivers that led to nothing. The current in the narrower rivers was very strong, and in consequence every half-hour or so brought a warning cry from the helmsman, "Look out!" clearing everybody immediately off the deck and into the nearest shelter, while the ship plunged her violent way into the bank, carrying off branches of trees wholesale and strewing the deck with fragments. After she had been backed off the passengers would come out again and begin hunting about for insects, which always came on board in thousands on these occasions. Ants of every kind were passed over



LOST IN THE DELTA

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as uninteresting (would that they had consented to pass us over in like fashion!); grasshoppers were common; but now and then something really odd rewarded our search. A praying mantis was one of the most amusing. It was a brown stick-like creature some three inches long, with four ordinary legs and two long serrated forelegs. Every now and then it raised itself upright in a kneeling posture and held up its forelegs devotionally before its face. This pious action was always followed by shrieks of laughter from the travellers. Its head, perched on a long slender neck, was usually drooped on one side in a manner suggesting extreme weariness of the world in general, and of its present company in particular. At times, however, especially when deluded into climbing an endless ladder of someone's fingers, presented one after the other, it wakened up to wrath and squared at the offender fiercely, challenging him to come on. If the challenge passed unnoticed, it made a fierce leap at his face, and then, without having inflicted any damage except a severe blow upon itself, it would drop back into its languid attitude of prayer and seem once more to forget the world. As a matter of fact, this attitude of prayer is its way of catching smaller insects, which mistake the immobile creature for a piece of stick and fly heedlessly against its outstretched arms.

Another insect of a very strange appearance came aboard in dozens and scores during this part of the journey. Most of us had an idea that it was new to

science (Papua is full of discoveries for the entomologist, as we all knew), but no one could say for certain. It was a sort of rough sketch of an insect, from a quarter to half an inch long, looking like a pinch of pale green cotton wool oddly fitted out with two black eyes and six legs. It had no wings, but stalked or skipped according to its mood. On its back was surely the oddest appendage ever seen on an insect—a bird-like tail, fan-shaped and set straight up in the air. The tail was apparently made of another pinch of cotton-wool, white this time, and rather carelessly stuck into place. It looked exceedingly like a minute green peacock with a white tail (four of its legs being inconspicuous), and the conceit of its aspect and demeanour as it strutted along the backs of the seats was something incredible. No one in Port Moresby, we afterwards found, had ever seen or heard of the curious little beast. We were sorry not to bring any away, but at the time no good method of killing or preserving them seemed to suggest itself to anyone.

That night we went aground again, rather seriously, and remained fast for some hours. We were running in the dusk across a huge dim lagoon that shone under the fading sky like a shield of tarnished silver when the disaster occurred, and the banks were too far away to give us any assistance in getting off. For the time being we accepted things as they were, remembered that the delta was all tidal, and trusted to the flood to get us away. Meanwhile we left the

deck, which was veiled with drifting rain, and went down to dinner.

Later on, the rain having slackened a little, we were all sitting on lounges with our feet tucked up, talking about murders and crocodiles, as one does in New Guinea, when somebody remarked that we were in a very lonely spot. It was a place perfectly unknown to white men, and it looked as if not even a native had been there since the creation of the world. There was not a stir on the whole dim face of the great lagoon, not so much as a fish leaping under the moonlight; no sound but the pattering of the desultory rain on the deck. It felt unpleasantly as if the Day of Judgment had somehow come and gone in the world outside without our knowledge, leaving us the last of men in a doomed and depopulated world.

Then, while we were talking and the steward was going round with the coffee, somebody exclaimed "Look!"

We looked. On the other side of the lagoon, not more than a furlong or so away, an immense fiery transparency eighty or a hundred feet high reared itself into the dark, where a moment before had been nothing but gloom. It was shaped like a pointed arch, but the lower part was hidden by thick bush, and we could not see exactly where it rose.

"A rabi, and a big one," said the captain. "There must be a town quite close."

Not a sound came from the direction of the great temple. The light burned steadily, dim and red, as

though filtered through some semi-transparent screen. A huge veil of mats as big as the mainsail of a tea-clipper is sometimes placed over the front of a rabi to conceal all sight of the ceremonies within from passing eyes. We guessed that the strange appearance before us was caused in some such manner. What devilry might be doing behind the screen only Satan himself could tell, and none of us wished to speculate about it.

The vision faded as quickly as it had arisen. In an instant, as we watched it, the light went out and the glowing arch vanished as though it had never been.

For all that, it did not leave the *Kia Ora* as it found her. We were no longer in a primæval solitude; on the contrary, we had some thousands of near neighbours about whom no one knew anything at all, except that they were savages of a pretty bad kind. Further, we were stuck fast, and could not get away for many hours. Also, we had no arms to speak of. In addition, we were loaded with covetable goods. And there was no particular reason to think that our score or two of recruits would take our side in case of trouble.

It sounds like an "adventure," but it did not feel like one. According to all the canons of literature, we should have been fortifying the ship against attack, posting sentries in the crow's-nest, looking up our one rifle and two pistols, and preparing, if necessary, to sell our lives and our beads and tomahawks

as dearly as possible. As a matter of fact, we were complaining about the quality of the coffee, and wondering if the rain was going to stop. No one troubled particularly about the rabi and its inhabitants. Of course, we might have been attacked, but we did not think it likely, and one cannot afford to trouble about improbabilities in a place so entirely incalculable as Papua.

Next morning we got away with the sunrise, and proceeded to lose ourselves as complexly and completely as ever a ship and ship's company were lost. We steamed for hours and miles and scores of miles up creeks that led finally to nowhere and had to be backed out of. We went up big rivers that were not on the map, and careered along deep waterways where dry land was distinctly charted. We went round and round and in and out, all the time seeing not a sign of life or even a cultivated tree. We sat down on shoals and got warped off with infinite difficulty; we smashed into the banks with the force of the current at the corners times without number, and carried away large sections of the surrounding forest. At last it became perfectly evident that the steamer was "bushed" (Anglicé, lost in the bush). This was the unexpected again. In Australia you do not get bushed with a steamer, nor do you go across country in one; but anything may happen in Papua.

The *Kia Ora*, under these trying circumstances, behaved as other things do that have lost their way. She sat down half on, half off a convenient shoal,

and bellowed loudly with her siren. It had no result whatever. She then got off the bank, pulled herself together, and made a last effort to strike, at least, the path by which she had come. In this she was not successful, but she found something—the Pacific Ocean—and immediately trumpeted her discovery like a pleased elephant. It was now clear that, if we did not exactly know where we were, we knew where we were not.

A forlorn hope in a boat was then sent out, duly provisioned and watered, and after the lapse of half a day returned with the cheering report that the coast mission station lay only a few points away on the port bow, and had furnished a pilot. With the guide (a native who knew something, not much—no one knows much about the delta) we started back for the river-maze again to look for another village, and succeeded in finding one—we were not at all particular by this time as to what we found or where we found it. Its name, we learned, was Iai. The people were an ugly-looking lot, and seemed terrified of the steamer at first, trembling and crying out when she let off her whistle. By and by, seeing our people come ashore, they gained confidence, and, keeping tight hold of their bows and arrows, came in a perfect flotilla of canoes round the ship, staring, muttering, spitting gory betel-nut, and all the time keeping an eye on the captain, who was busy recruiting ashore, followed by about half the men of the village. The women did not hide themselves, but







none of them ventured near the ship; they kept away by themselves, and did not even stop their monotonous sago-beating work to look at us. Very few white people had ever been seen in Iai, but you cannot be curious if you are miserable, and no one who looked at the degraded, brutalised, smileless faces of these poor women could have doubted the fact that they were utterly wretched. They were a shade lower than anything we had yet seen in the delta or elsewhere. They had not even the grass petticoats worn in other districts; save for a small strip of bark, they were naked. Some of them wore the white tusk thrust through the nose, which we had noticed in the men of the river tribes, but not in the women. It looked, if possible, even more repulsive on a woman's face than a man's.

The sago-beating in which they were employed takes up most of a woman's time in the delta country. The men fell and bring in the palms, and there their task stops. With crude stone adzes the women hollow out the trunk, loosening the pith, and collecting it in the hollow of the gutted tree. They then pour water into the trunk and wash out the starchy matter of which the pith is full, letting the latter fall on the ground. The starch or sago is dried in the sun and tied up in bundles, which are neatly packed in leaves. The work is slow and tedious. On the recent Mackay exploring expedition the carriers made sago for the food of the party, and it was found that they could not make more than two days' supply in

a whole day's work. In all probability the Purari woman does not get through so much.

At Iai, rather to our astonishment, there was quite a *furor* to engage, and we went away with the *Kia Ora's* accommodation pretty severely taxed—"the connection of which with the plot" did not appear until some days later, when we heard that the Iai warriors had been in mischief and were very anxious indeed to get out of the way of possible vengeance. If anyone ever deserved retribution, they did. They had asked eleven of the people from a neighbouring village to come over and spend a happy day with them. The people (who certainly ought to have known their neighbours a little better) accepted the invitation. They put on their dogs'-teeth necklaces and their parrot-feather haloes, painted their faces in fresh black and red, and arrived in canoes, prepared to have a good time. There was a good time; but, as things turned out, only the Iaians had it. They also had the visitors—boiled, with sticks of sago.

A return call was confidently expected before long from the survivors, and the Iaians, innocent and guilty alike, were very anxious to be "not at home." For this reason a score or two of the party-givers came away with us, hoping, no doubt, that any local prejudice would have time to subside before they came back from the plantations. The actual murderers did not enlist. They were captured by the police some time afterwards.

## CHAPTER V

Among the rubber plantations—Prospects of Para—The gold-mine of the soil—Land that goes begging—The cost of rubber—About the cocoanut—A sisal hemp plantation—*Ficus rigo*—A splendid sugar country—Timbers still untouched—Copper and gold.

FROM Iai we made our way out into the open sea without any further disasters, and took our way Port Moresby-wards with our cargo of plantation hands. All of them on arrival were taken up to the magistrate, who satisfied himself that they understood what they were going to do and how much they were going to get. If any one of them at this stage of the proceedings had changed his mind about going on with the affair, the recruiter would have been obliged to take him back to his home at the earliest opportunity, and meantime provide him with food and lodging. None of them did change their minds, however, and in the course of a few hours the whole hundred had affixed their marks to the contract which the recruiting agent had already signed. It was discovered about this time that there were several men more than could be accounted for—in fact, that we had actually been carrying stowaways! The extra hands were as anxious as the others to sign on, and went away quite pleased with themselves.

Well, I had "seen the Medway," and that was more than any one of the planters who anticipated shortage of labour had done. What conclusions were suggested?

This only—that the alarm was the purest of myth. Since that visit a year and a half has passed, and the plantations that were to have been long ago "held up" for want of boys are still working full pressure. The great unknown and uncivilised West has enough men to supply the plantations ten times over for many years to come. I do not wonder that those who have never seen the dense population of the rivers should imagine—judging by the more thinly peopled districts of the East—that the supply might have a limit. But no one who has seen the West, and been actual witness of the readiness which the natives display to enlist, can think that there are not "hands" in plenty for all Papua.

The eastern districts supply very good men, better in some ways than the "Kiwai," as the western people are called. They are less quarrelsome among themselves, and seem to learn the plantation work quicker. The intellect of the western, however, appears to be capable of a higher development in exceptional cases. I have seen a coffee plantation left under the sole charge of a "Kiwai" overseer, who attended to the weeding, picking, pulping, and drying of the coffee without any regular help, though the owner used to make a visit to the place once in a few weeks. On another plantation not far from this, the native labourers



*Photo 16, II taken.*

THE LABOURER'S WELCOME HOME

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under charge of a Kiwai got in the whole crop of coffee without any direction during the absence of the owner, who had always seen to it himself before.

It would be a great deal too much to say that the Papuan is as satisfactory, or as cheap, as the Cingalese or Chinese worker ; but his wages (ten shillings a month) are not high, and he serves his turn well on the whole. The importation of foreign labour is forbidden by the laws of the Papuan Government, so, for good or ill, he must be made the best of.

On one of the plantations a new system is at present being tried with very good results. It has been recognised for some time that there are drawbacks to the custom of taking away a large number of the young men from a village, sometimes for years together. Some of the women are left without their husbands, and quarrels and murders often occur in consequence ; others remain unmarried, and the population does not increase as it should. The workers themselves often grow discontented at the absence of their women, and do not sign on for a second term, though well enough contented with the work and pay. To remedy this one planter is putting up married quarters for his men, and enabling them to bring their wives with them free of expense. Ground for yam and manioc growing is given them, and rations provided free for the wife while the first crop of native food is being raised. Each couple is given a neat little separate house, built by the carpenter of the plantation. The wife is not asked to work unless



she chooses, but if she cares to take a hand with light weeding, mat and basket making, gathering crops, or other temporary labour, she is paid by the piece, and so are the children if any of them are old enough to help. It is hoped that in this way permanent villages of skilled workers will be gathered about the plantations and the expense and trouble of recruiting much lessened. On the plantation referred to the manager has actually taken the step of presenting the boys with sufficient "trade" to buy a wife, provided they bring their wives with them to stay out their engagement. The offer has created unprecedented excitement, and the consequent demand for wives has almost caused a rise in the market. This is easily understood when one considers that a good many of the "boys" recruit almost solely with the object of accumulating wealth enough to purchase a wife at the end of their term of labour.

I wanted to see this plantation, so I took advantage of an opportunity that presented itself later on, and left the *Merrie England* one morning very early in a whaleboat towed by a launch. It is rather inconveniently situated, being twelve miles up a river, but nevertheless the country immediately round seems to be popular, as seven other plantations are to be found in the same district.

Through water-forests of nipa palm, under towering mangrove trees a hundred feet high, the ugly, useful little steam-launch panted her way mile after mile. Sometimes we crossed great shallow lagoons

where a good look out for sand-banks had to be kept ; sometimes we glided along through dense overarching shade in a stream deep enough to float an ocean liner. There were no banks to this river ; the trees sprang straight up out of the stream after the strange fashion of New Guinea, and one could see the sparkle of dark stagnant water far in among the depths of the surrounding forest. It seemed as if there had been a huge inundation, burying all the land, and only allowing the trees to emerge. Very still indeed was the whole weird tangle of forest and river through which we threaded our way—these rivers are always still as sleep, running as they do sheltered and hidden at the bottom of their great cañons of mangrove, where not a breath of wind can stir the palms and the trailing, suffocating liana creepers. There was only one obvious thing to do—go to sleep until the plantation was reached ; so I did.

Three hours later we got to the landing-stage, a rough, strong platform of logs, with a “corduroy road,” also of logs, leading up from it towards the plantation manager’s hut. The place is interesting in this land of brand-new plantations, being the only one where rubber is being tried on a fairly large scale. Eight thousand acres have been taken up. At the time of my visit six hundred were cleared and planted with Para rubber. It looked rather a desolate scene, as the whole six hundred acres was in one large bare block, covered with a raffle of decaying branches and black half-burned trunks of trees,

among which the slender young saplings of rubber were scarcely noticeable. Another year or two would see a beautiful park of many shady avenues take the place of this wilderness, but only the eye of faith could see anything attractive about the plantation as it looked early in 1909.

One of the assistant managers, in the absence of the head, took our little party round and explained with enthusiasm all that had been done. It was evident that he loved every straggling rubber-stump and each feathery little seedling like his own child. The "nursery" almost moved him to tears; and in truth it was a pretty sight, with the hundreds of bright green seedlings clustered together in beds and the taller plants set neatly in hedges beneath the shelter of the surrounding forest. A good many of the saplings had attained the height of fourteen feet in fourteen months from the sowing of the seed. The soil of this district is like most Papuan soils, rich enough to act as a natural forcing-house on anything that is planted in it. Rubber is a very greedy tree, and cannot be grown without plenty of rain, plenty of sun, plenty of the richest constituents in the soil—in fact, unless "done well" in every way, it will not do you well. If you can satisfy its demands, however, it will make you wealthy in a very few years. Here are some of the figures put briefly.

A hundred acres of rubber costs about a thousand pounds to clear and plant, including every possible expense, and leaving a margin of a hundred pounds

or more for contingencies. The weeding and upkeep of the plantation for six years, until the trees are ready to tap, will cost another fifteen hundred, if the owner manages himself. If he employs a manager, he will have to pay him about three hundred a year, which adds eighteen hundred more. Assuming that the owner does his own managing (always the best plan if possible), the plantation will have cost him about two thousand five hundred pounds by the time it begins to pay back. He will also have had to keep himself, but if he lives on his plantation the expense of this is small.

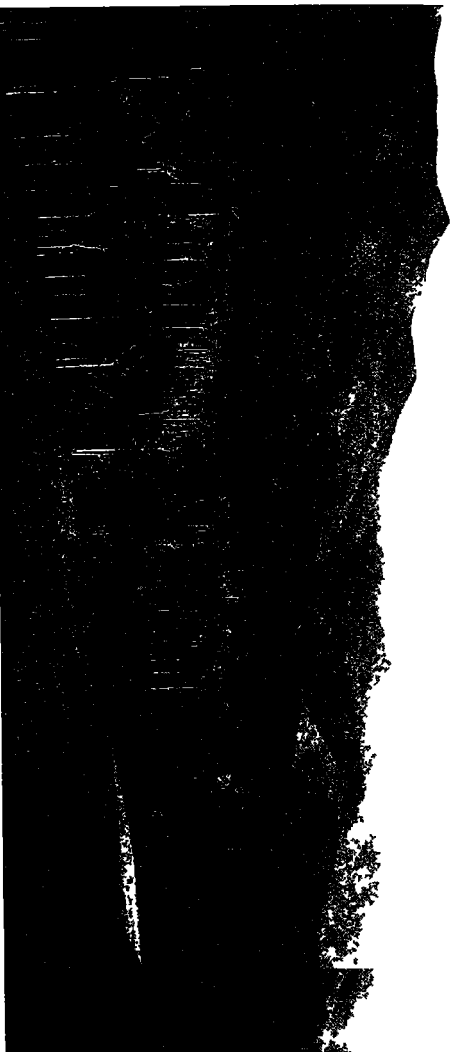
In the sixth year the trees, at a low estimate, should give a pound of rubber each. At five shillings a pound, eighty-six trees being planted to the acre, this is equal to £2150—very nearly the whole of the expenditure already. In the next year the yield should be doubled, and later on it will, under ordinary conditions, rise as high as eight pounds a tree—possibly much more. An income of seventeen thousand a year, from an original expenditure of not much over two, should be good enough to please the most exacting.

Will the present price of rubber keep up? There is every reason to suppose that it will, as the demand constantly increases. But even if it falls considerably, there will still be a large profit. It has been calculated that when, or if, rubber is procurable at three shillings a pound, it will pay street paving contractors to make very extensive use of it. In that case the

demand for paving work will be enormous. Anything over a shilling a pound is profit to the grower.

There is another word to be said about the matter. All these calculations are based on what has been done by rubber planters in Ceylon, the Malay States, and other well-known colonies, as it is not yet six years since the first of the rubber trees (those in the Astrolabe plantations) were set out. But there is good reason to suppose that Papua may do better. It is the natural home of the rubber tree. For a good many years, off and on, a certain amount of rubber from the wild trees of the country (*Ficus rigo*) has been irregularly sent to the home and colonial markets, and has always fetched high prices. Now the *Haevia Braziliensis*, or Para rubber, which is of late being planted, is much superior to the *Ficus rigo*, which in this country seems to equal the Para in others. The inference is that the Para will do better in Papua than it has done anywhere else.

So far as experience goes, it carries out this supposition. The manager of the plantation I visited had come to Papua from Ceylon, one of the chief rubber-growing countries of the world. He was of opinion that his plantation looked better and promised better than anything he had ever had under his hands before. The rapid growth of the young rubber was phenomenal, and it did not seem to be suffering in any way from its quick development. It must be remembered in this connection that all the Asiatic



*Photo W 11 button*

IN 1 H. LOW LK RANGLS

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countries have been inhabited for centuries by civilised, industrious peoples, who have fully understood the value of the soil and taken all they could get out of it. Papua, on the contrary, has been in the hands of absolute savages of the lowest kind. They know nothing of agriculture, except so far as concerns the raising of a minimum of easy crops of vegetables and fruit, and the ground that has already been used for this sort of farming bears about as much relation to the virgin soils as a biscuit might to a large dining-room table. Further, the soil of Papua is very probably richer in itself than that of any other British colony, owing to the local conditions of constant heat, large rainfall maintained by very high mountains, dense vegetation, and numberless rivers.

It is indeed a land of rivers. On the plantation I was visiting there are so many rivers, large and small, that they are simply known by numbers—"Creek" number one, number two, and so on. Water carriage is easy everywhere in the low country; even the plantations that are many miles inland can always have a river to act as beast of burden. In the mountains you must use mules, which are costly, but then the mountain climate is perfect, and that of the low country is not, though by no means so bad as it has been represented. Each district has its own advantages and its own drawbacks.

On these lowland plantations life is much the same as in the mountains, with this difference, that communication with Moresby or Samarai is quick and



easy, being carried on by the plantation launch or cutter. Food is largely supplied by the shooting boys, who spend their time tramping the bush with a shot-gun and an allowance of cartridges, stalking wild pig, wallaby, pigeon, duck, and miscellaneous birds. Most kinds of English vegetables—lettuce, cabbage, carrots, radishes, etc.—can be grown on the plantation with little trouble. There are many tropical vegetables which are very good of their kind, such as yams, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, chokos, aubergines, manioc, and which help to make a variety. Bananas and plantains, which are a variety of cooking banana, will in any case be grown for the labour. Cocoanuts are most useful in the tropical cuisine, and can be obtained elsewhere. Fish are to be caught in most of the rivers. Fruit can be grown in any quantity—pineapples do rather too well, having a tendency to “take charge” of the place if not restrained: pawpaws (a kind of tree-melon) spring up like weeds, and granadilla, which is certainly the queen fruit of the tropics, as well as passion-fruit, not much its inferior, can be trained over trellis work near the house to add to the beauty of the surroundings with their lovely flowers and leaves. Oranges, lemons, and limes grow wild in many places, and can be quickly raised where they do not. On the whole, the planter lives well in a simple way, and his food costs him as nearly as possible nothing.

Houses are generally built of native materials out



BUILDING A PLANTER'S HOUSE

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of the bush at first, as a wood and iron bungalow costs several hundred pounds, and the other, if built by plantation labour, need not cost more than fifty. These houses of thatch, bark, and split branches are quite comfortable and weatherproof and very picturesque. They harbour insects, however, rather more than is convenient and need a good many small repairs; for which reason the prosperous planter generally orders himself a bungalow of wood and corrugated iron from Sydney when he feels that he can afford luxuries, and settles down in a house with glass windows (which are never closed), an iron roof, a boarded verandah, and (if he has a wife) a drawing-room full of cane and bentwood furniture, framed photographs, and mats. The sitting-room is quite certain to be decorated with native clubs and arrows arranged in trophies on the walls, stone axe-heads, alligator-jaws, swordfish swords, huge clam-shells, pearl-shell necklaces, head-dresses of coloured feathers, and other Papuan curios. There will be saddles and bridles on the back verandah, and samples of hemp or rubber or coffee—*un peu partout*. There will be half a dozen home-made canvas stretchers and some mosquito nets and blankets stowed away somewhere for the accommodation of any unexpected guests who may happen to sail or ride in and demand a lodging. Nothing more is necessary; a Papuan planter house can put up an extra dozen without feeling it at any time. Most people sleep in the open air by preference, and the verandah of even the smallest house

can easily be made into a comfortable dormitory for as many as you may please.

At the present time the tendency of settlers is to take up land in a district where they are sure of a few neighbours, such as Galley Reach, which has eight plantations, large and small, or Sogeri, in the Astrolabe, which has three. This is very natural, but restricts the planter a good deal in his choice. Some of the very best districts in Papua have not yet been so much as inquired after. It would be a great advantage to the colony and to settlers themselves if they could come in parties and take up a good extent of country among five or six friends. This would avoid the complete isolation which new-comers naturally dread, and at the same time would open up excellent country which is at present being neglected.

It will scarcely be believed, but is nevertheless true, that land of the best quality, lying close beside the towns, still remains to be taken up. While staying at Samarai I spent a day walking in the bush to gather some personal impression of what yet remained in the way of "plums" for the enterprising selector. The tale of that day is worth telling in a chapter about plantations.

I had been staying on Samarai for some weeks, but was busy with other work, and had (like most people) taken it for granted that at the present stage of the country's development all the good land lying close up to the largest town in the Territory must necessarily have been secured. Samarai is built on a small



*Photo IV. Whitten.*

# THE EMPTY LANDS

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island some two miles from the mainland of Papua, and is surrounded by very beautiful scenery of hills and valleys sloping down to the shores of the many bays and inlets that indent the coast. From the verandah of the hotels you can almost count the trees on the shores, and can see every little clearing and every patch planted with native food as clearly as if you were beside them.

"I suppose all that is taken up long ago?" I said vaguely one day, hanging over the verandah railing and looking out at the splendid view across the harbour.

"All what?" asked the resident, who was lounging in a hammock-chair close at hand.

"That land in sight of Samarai, on the mainland. I wonder why they don't clear it."

"Some of it's native—not much. The rest isn't anybody's—most of it."

"What's the matter with it?"

"Nothing that I know of."

"Then why does no one apply for it?"

"What for?"

"To plant—land only half an hour from the steamer wharf!"

"Oh—to plant! Yes, somebody has taken up some, I believe—a few acres somewhere to grow something, I forget what."

"Don't you think it will be worth a good deal of money by and by?"

"I don't know. It never was worth any that I



remember. Soil? Oh, yes, I suppose it's all right. But nobody wants it."

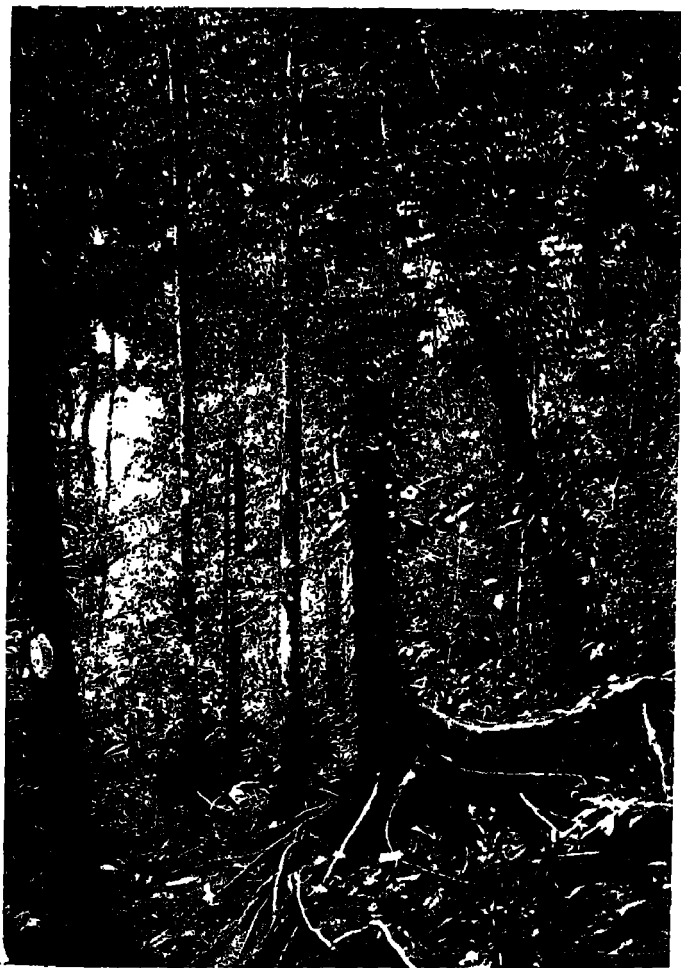
"Why in the name of common sense don't they?"

"Well, come to think of it, you can't plant for nothing, and we're none of us millionaires here."

The argument seemed sound so far as it went. It appeared worth while, all the same, to take a boat across to the other side and see what there was to be seen. Guessing from previous experience what that might be, I was careful to put on hobnailed boots and a dress that had seen so much service as to be incapable of further damage. It is not in silk attire that one must walk the bush country of Papua.

The boat landed myself and a friend on a narrow strip of shore backed up by primæval forest country standing on its hind legs—the usual conformation of the bush. A small red scratch ran through it. This was called the track. I did not call it a track: what I did call it at various times during the day that followed I should prefer not to repeat. It was almost entirely composed (like the diet of a fasting saint) of roots and water, and you used your hands as much as your feet in getting along it. After a mile or so of this rough going we came out into a clearing where there was a little house built of native materials and a white man moving about in the open. This was the pioneer of the district—the only man who has made a settlement in that part of the coast.

Mr. S—— greeted us very hospitably, and offered



*Photo W. Whitten.*

A PAPUAN HIGH ROAD

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to guide us to a hill some miles away, where we could get a good view of the surrounding country. His own little clearing—but a very few acres—was on a modest, not to say a minute scale, and nothing was yet planted. Want of capital was the handicap here, as in other cases. But Mr. S—— hopes to be able to put in some rubber by degrees, and he is as enthusiastic about the possibilities of the surrounding country as if he were a squatter owning hundreds of thousands of acres.

It is hard for people who have never been out of the civilised countries to realise the difficulties of moving about in absolutely untouched tropical lands. Every yard of the way must be made, and the making is of the roughest kind. When you face the edge of a clearing you are confronted by a wall of forest that does not indeed look quite impenetrable, but that is nevertheless as complete a barrier as a brick wall. It is not all composed of huge trees—the growth is too dense for that—but of moderate-sized trunks and saplings for the most part, knitted and laced together with inconspicuous little creepers, many of them thorny, that must be cut through before you can set one foot before the other. Fallen logs, half-fallen logs, slanting broken boughs, holes and pits where dead roots have rotted away, still further block your progress. A “track” in country still unsettled means simply a part of the bush from which the worst obstacles have been removed, more or less. The logs lying crossways at a height of four

or five feet, all filled up with rubbish, have been taken away ; those that can be scrambled or stepped over are left. Some of the small trees have been cut down and most of the slanting branches removed. It is now possible to proceed along a footing of roots and slippery clay, clambering over a log now and then, and dodging branches every few yards, walking through a stream when you come to one and following its bed wherever the water is shallow enough, climbing up hills that are almost perpendicular every few minutes with caked dirt on your boots and despair in your heart as you realise that the next hundred yards will wrest from you in one rapid down-plunge all that you have painfully gained in the last half-mile, and avoiding as best you may pitfalls everywhere laid for the unwary foot by loops and snares of root-fibre. This you will be told is a track.

When a district is cleared and opened out, and constant traffic of carriers, mules, and horses begins to pass along, the miry bottoms are filled up, the trees kept permanently cut, and log bridges built over the gullies. I have seen astonishingly good roads up in the mountain districts made by the workers of a plantation on a spot where only a few months before the worst of "tracks" used to exasperate the unfortunate traveller. The Government spends every year a certain amount of money on roads, but the funds available for this purpose are small, and at the present time almost every planter

has made, or is making, his own roads. It is not a very serious matter after all when one has already undertaken the job of clearing the forest off hundreds of acres of land ; and once made, a very little work will keep the roads in fair order.

After three miles or so of track scrambling we reached a tiny native village, standing on the top of a sharply pointed hill. Here, Mr. S—— informed me, I could get a view of the surrounding district and see what there was to be had.

The view was pretty but not enlightening : a sea of dark green tree-tops sparkling after recent rain ; heights and hollows filled up and covered by billows of leafage ; land somewhere underneath, no doubt, but no visible sign of it. Mr. S——, however, was enthusiastic in his praise of the whole district—all close to Samarai, all within sight of the sea if the tree-tops were not in your way, all the richest of soil, all well watered (I could answer for that, and so could my clothes). There was no gold thereabouts, he added apologetically, as if he felt that it was an unpardonable omission on the part of someone—the creeks had been prospected, and there was not so much as a colour. But there were two or three other things that would repay investigation. Did I see that tree with the orange-red bark ? It was the kind of bark that would make excellent paper with a little treatment. There was a great deal of good brick clay about the district, and he had seen plenty of ironstone. There was forty acres of sago all in

one plot not very far away; it was good sago country. On the whole, an excellent district, and he wondered that no one but himself had taken up land.

I went back again in the afternoon, very wet and dirty, but satisfied with the day. If I were taking up land in Papua I should certainly select it on the coast. The coast lands are as good as any others, and the advantage of easy access in a country of such irregular surface is too great to be neglected.

But one could imagine the new settler—especially if he is just out from home—being struck with despair as he sees his newly acquired estate for the first time. A dark, wet, gloomy, silent forest, impenetrable as a wall, slimy underfoot, dripping overhead—it takes the eye of faith to see in all this promise of future prosperity and comfort; to realise that the hideous soil is almost pure leaf-mould, generations old and full of fatness; that the encumbering trees are in many cases valuable timber, and that most of the sopping, spongy wet will pass away when the land is laid open to light and air. . . . The pioneer earns his prosperity dearly enough; still, here as elsewhere, all things come to him who can afford to wait.

Rubber is by no means the only culture to be recommended, although it is one about which much has been heard. Copra is preferred by a good many, and it certainly has its advantages. Copra is the trade term for the dried kernel of the cocoanut. The demand for this product is steady and safe and not much subject to market fluctuations. It is very



*Photo W. Whitem.*

# A PLANTATION HOLIDAY

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largely used in the composition of some of the best-known soaps in the world, and is also much in demand for cocoa-butter, oil, oil-cake, and other manufactures. Little or no skill is required in its preparing, since that is simply a matter of cutting and drying the nuts. The work of planting and weeding cocoanut palms and preparing copra is one that the native takes to very easily, as he is already familiar with most of it. Six years is the average time before the trees come into bearing; they remain in bearing for something like seventy or eighty. Half a ton of copra an acre is safe to reckon on; good trees well looked after should produce much more when ten or fifteen years old. The present price of copra sold in Papua is £14 a ton. It has been on the increase for years past, and there is no reason to suppose that it will be less in future.

A plantation of a hundred acres, therefore, after six years should begin by producing about £700 yearly, and will eventually be worth almost double as much. Its first cost will depend very much on the district it is in, as clearing expenses vary largely. I have seen a fine plantation that was cleared and planted for less than £2 an acre; but the price is generally more. Local contractors will undertake any kind of clearing and planting for £6 an acre; and no doubt a good profit is made out of this.

The truth is that it is hardly possible to give precise figures as to expenses that will provide for all conditions. Most planters keep accounts rather

loosely, and not all are willing to tell what their profits may be. It can be generally said about copra that it is as safe and simple a thing as a man can undertake, and that it is pre-eminently the culture for the settler who wishes to make a future provision for his children. The uses of the cocoanut are so many that there is no reasonable possibility of its being driven out by chemical manufactures. An estate in going order will always sell well if the owner wishes to dispose of it, and it takes less money to keep up than almost any other kind of plantation, nor does it go to pieces if altogether neglected for a few years.

The item of working expenses is another that can hardly be figured out precisely without actual conditions as a guide. Some planters find that £150 a year, exclusive of manager's salary, will keep a plantation of a hundred acres going; others place the figure a little higher; one puts it a good deal lower. There is nothing to do during the six years of waiting but keep the place weeded; and in some districts labour of a casual kind, quite suitable for such work, can be had for seven shillings a month.

This six years' waiting is the principal trouble with the two great cultures of Papua, rubber and copra. At first sight, sisal hemp and other quickly paying plants seem so much more profitable that one wonders why anyone ever undertakes the slow-growing cocoanut or *Haevia Braziliensis*. But it must not be for-

gotten that these two trees make a life provision, and something more, for their cultivators, whereas hemp, cotton, etc., only last a short time. If one does not care to keep on an estate indefinitely, the copra or rubber plantation sells for a high figure, since, once made, it is made for a generation or more, and will go on producing money beyond the life of its makers. This is the real value of rubber and copra.

The interval of waiting is of course a serious difficulty to small capitalists. "Catch crops," however, can be made use of to lessen the expense. There is a good market for maize in the Territory, and two crops a year can be produced almost anywhere—in some cases three or four. Bananas, which bear in fifteen months, have not yet been grown commercially in Papua; but there is no reason why they should not be cultivated in the coast districts, as the monthly steamers can take them to the Australian markets without transshipping. Peanuts and millet pay well in the New Hebrides, and should do well in Papua also if tried. The number of possible catch crops is large, but the nature of the country would in most cases limit choice to one or two. With good management and economy, the planter should be able to keep himself and his plantation going by catch crops during the whole of the six years. As regards rubber, there are several kinds of temporary crops that actually benefit the young tree, since it demands a good deal of shade.

The native rubber of Papua, *Ficus rigo*, has hardly

received the attention that it deserves. It has some disadvantages, the chief of which is that it takes a year longer to come into bearing than the Para, and that it does not at first produce so much rubber, though what it does produce is quite as valuable. But it can be grown in the "dry belt," where the climate is bright and comparatively cool almost all the year. The country is open and grassy, and clearing is extremely light. This dry belt, which extends for about a hundred miles along the coast near Port Moresby, and is only a few miles wide, is eminently suited to the *Ficus rigo*. One planter has put in a good many acres, but as this variety of rubber does not bear till eight years old, there has been no opportunity of seeing what can be done with it on a large scale. The trees on this plantation look extremely well, and require little care. They are easier to plant and rear than the Para rubber. In the eighth year a *Ficus rigo* gives about half to three-quarters of a pound of rubber, and goes on increasing in yield till it is fifteen or twenty years old, by which time a healthy tree should be producing as much as seven or eight pounds. The life of the tree, judging by the wild specimens, is very long, some rubber trees of great but unknown age being quite a forest in themselves, and covering many hundreds of feet with the spread of their immense branches.

The advantages of native rubber over Para may be summed up in a few words. It is somewhat cheaper to plant (exact figures cannot be given, as the only

native rubber that has been planted was worked together with other products). It flourishes in a dry, bright climate and in open country, where the Para rubber could not be grown. It is native to the Territory, and therefore more resistant in all probability to any form of parasite or disease than Para would be.

Its disadvantages are : eight years before tapping, as against six years, and a slightly lesser return than the Para when first tapped.

I am enabled to give some pictures of the native rubber, as I visited the plantation where it is being grown together with sisal hemp. Several planters have taken up this last product, which seems likely to become very popular. There is no long waiting for returns, as the hemp bears in two and a half years, and the prices obtained are very paying.

The plantation is in the "dry belt," about three miles from the sea.

A beautiful little sea village is built far out in the water near the landing-place. It belongs to the natives of the coast, and is inhabited by several hundred people. The houses are not connected in any way with the shore, but stand out by themselves in the clear green water some hundreds of yards from the beach. They are built on strong piles about ten feet high, with ladders reaching up to the doors and verandahs hanging clear out over the cool salt waves. We had no time to visit the village, but one could easily imagine how fresh and pleasant the houses must be, especially in the trying "between

seasons" period, when the trade-wind has knocked off work and the monsoon has not yet begun, the air is dark with heat, and the mosquitoes rival the Plagues of Egypt in virulence. The architectural skill shown in these houses is remarkable. Although sheltered by the reef from actual storms, they must at times experience a good deal of bad weather; yet all the piles stood straight and firm in the water, and none of the roofs seemed tilted. One wonders how the supports were ever driven deep enough by a people entirely ignorant of all but the roughest tools. One wonders also what the mortality from drowning may be among the babies: the moated granges of Old England, which must have been such a source of trouble to anxious mothers, were nothing compared with the water villages of Papua.

Once landed, we had an exceedingly enjoyable walk up a grassy avenue three miles long leading to the plantation. The avenue was bordered with graceful young cocoanut palms, tall flamboyant trees alight with geranium-coloured blooms, white-flowered acacias, kapok or silk-cotton trees, and the beautiful frangipani, with its dark-green, lance-shaped leaves and perfumed creamy flowers. Grassy plains stretched away to left and right, hemmed in by distant hills, while in front, as the long avenue unwound, the distance began to show blue-green with the slopes and levels of the planted hemp. It was a beautiful scene, and none the less lovely for the fact that all this picturesqueness had cost no more than the

making of a country lane in England. In the opulent tropics, the man who at home would have to put up with a semi-detached villa and half an acre of clayey garden, vacant six months out of twelve, can be master of an estate more beautiful and better laid out than a nobleman's park.

We passed through the hemp plantation before reaching the house—a pretty bungalow on the peak of a hill, reached by a little avenue of huge hemp plants set in borders. Sisal hemp is in appearance like the aloe that flourishes in tubs in the courtyards of so many continental hotels. Set out in the endless rows of a plantation, it is stiff, quaint, and picturesque, and its glaucous blue-green colour gives a certain coolness—often illusory enough—to the landscape.

The planter told me that about £1500 would clear, plant, and keep up a plantation of 100 acres, including house, living, wages, etc., until the plants bear; but it would be well to contemplate something beyond this sum for the unforeseen, such as illness, journeys, etc. The life of the hemp plant for crops is five or six years; it is ready for cutting in the third year from planting. The supply is kept up by occasional planting in between the first rows.

Looking at the results the figures certainly seem attractive, as over £1500 can be expected for the first year's crop, and there will still be four or five more crops to come on, while the capital expenditure has been but £2000. The preparing of the fibre is



not a complicated matter, and the small amount of machinery used by this plantation was at the time of my visit being driven by a Papuan native quite successfully.

It is only fair to state that in hemp as well as in rubber the inquirer sometimes finds theory ahead of fact in Papua. No one has yet made cent per cent on his capital out of either *Haevia Braziliensis* or *Ficus rigo*. The figures given are based on calculations of what small plantations worked by men of small means have done and on the excellent appearance of the coming crops on the larger and newer plantations. If a score or two of fortunes had been made in the country (as they certainly will be made in the next few years) it would be widely known and extensively "rushed," and anything that the present writer could tell would not have the advantage of novelty. It is hardly necessary to say that the wildest estimates as to possible profits on hemp, rubber, cocoanuts, etc., are current in many parts of Papua, but the sensible settler will take these for what they are worth. The reality seems good enough for any reasonable person.

A good many small islands, mostly about the eastern end of Papua, have been taken up from time to time by various people. There is something perennially attractive to the Briton in the idea of an island of his own. The longing finds its expression in endless songs, in half the stories that delight the youth of the country, and in the rush of purchasers

that always follows the rare advertisements of islands for sale about the English or Scottish coasts. Settlers anxious to find an island home in the Pacific are known to every Australasian steamship company, and some of them find their way to Papua.

There is plenty of choice for the would-be island king about the immense coasts of the Territory, but one cannot conscientiously recommend island life in Papua for anyone but the hermit or the crank. The coral isles of the poet's dream are indeed here, but the South Sea atmosphere is not. The attractive, well-mannered native of Polynesia is here replaced by the Stone Age savage, or by no one at all, many of the islands being quite uninhabited, and a good many of them are so far removed from the mainland as to be useless to anyone who does not want to cut himself off from his kind for life.

But of these islands I shall have more to say later on.

So far, the planters of Papua have confined their energies to the production of coffee, copra, rubber, and hemp. There are many other tropical products that would pay equally well, but all is so new and so untried in this first colony of a colony that the industries of the place can scarcely be said to have found their feet.

Cotton has been experimentally tried and proved to be of very fine quality. A number of spices and drugs have been grown in the Government nurseries with good results. Few planters so much as think

of drugs or spices, but they have their good points, not among the least of which is comparative smallness of bulk. This saves a great deal of expense in transit, and in the case of certain drugs even allows the grower to dispose of his produce by parcel post.

In the near future there can be little doubt that sugar will take a place superior in importance to that of rubber, copra, or fibres.

Papua is pre-eminently, by nature, the sugar country of the south. Sugar-cane grows wild all over the Territory, from sea-level up to 6000 feet of altitude ; and its quality, even in a natural state, is so high that planters in Fiji and Queensland constantly send to the country for cuttings. One agent lately sent out by a well-known sugar-growing company succeeded in obtaining over 200 varieties of cane, nearly all of them new. A visitor who had been in charge of a large Queensland plantation gave it as his opinion that much of Papua was ahead of the famous Johnson River sugar-growing country, and would produce record crops if planted. In the north-eastern division there are hundreds of square miles of open, well-watered country, fit to grow the finest cane in the world, that have never so much as been seen by a white man, with the exception of the Resident Magistrate, who patrols the district at intervals of a few months. None of it is occupied or needed by the natives, and most of it is within easy reach of the coast. This district is sure to be among

the first taken up when the sugar industry gets a fair start.

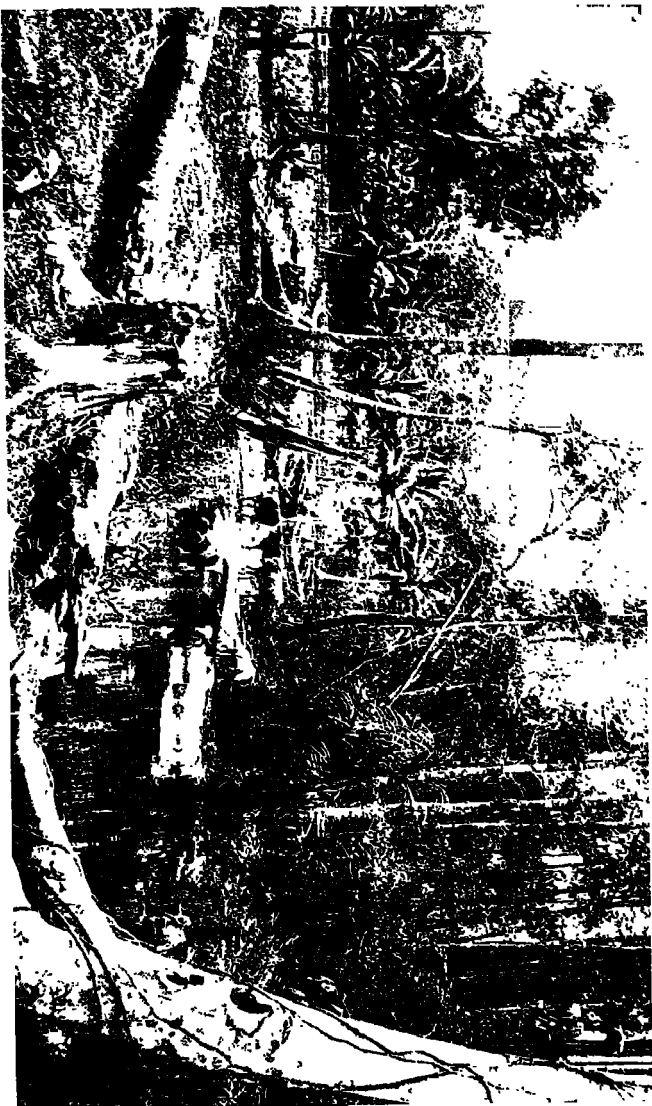
Sugar, however, is one of the things that do not concern the individual planter. It requires capital running into many thousands to start a business of this kind, and companies are needed to furnish the money. Nor need the canny speculator hope to "grab" large districts in the sugar country and hold them until they become valuable, for the land laws of Papua have been framed with the object of nipping just such brilliant ideas as these in the bud. Land cannot be held unless it is improved; the speculator who tries to block large areas for his own purposes will find himself obliged to make way for someone with less desire for the "unearned increment" and more inclination towards hard work. Nor can anyone take up more than a limited amount of land, 10,000 acres being the most allowed to one person. If these regulations are at times harassing to the company promoter, especially to the speculative type that makes its profits at the expense of the shareholders, they are protective to the individual worker, and it is, after all, the man with a moderate capital and a hard-working disposition who does the making of new countries.

Several companies have taken up land in Papua for rubber, copra, and hemp-growing, and are understood to be doing very well. The Government is not "down on" the company promoter who is prepared to develop his holding in a reasonable time and to

acquiesce in local labour conditions and laws. New countries need the company as well as the private individual to set the wheels going. But it is certain that in Papua, at all events, there will be no money made by locking up lands, whether it is an association or an individual that attempts to do the locking.

This is a detail that carries small significance to an Englishman. It carries much more to an Australian, since the greatest social difficulty that Australia has at present to face is this very problem of locked-up lands. Large areas of highly productive land taken up by the early settlers were held for generations as sheep and cattle runs or left unused, and have now to be bought back by the Government at high prices and subdivided among a crowd of eager settlers. This is a difficulty that only affects some of the States, but nevertheless the inconvenience and expense have been serious enough to make Australians shy of incurring a repetition in the new colony where all things are possible. The new land laws of Papua are the work of the present Lieutenant-Governor, who belongs to New South Wales, a State that has suffered more than others from "locking-up" troubles.

In a chapter devoted to the industries of Papua it would be impossible to omit the timber trade, although nothing has been heard of it as yet outside the colony. Indeed, one might almost say that so far the timber trade does not exist. A good deal of land has been taken up and some clearing done, but sawmills have not at the time of writing been intro-



*Plate IV. Whitten.*

CATTLE FARMING: SARIBA ISLAND

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duced (with the exception of two small mills used by the missions), and it is scarcely possible to make money out of Papuan timber if it cannot be cut up on the spot, as freights are rather high. Still, the hopes of the industry are rose-coloured. The amount of good timber is unlimited, most of it is very easily got at, and the sale even in Papua may be depended on as large and constant.

One of the Government Forest Inspectors of Queensland was lately sent up to Papua to report on the timbers by the Commonwealth authorities. His account, compiled after many months of travel and investigation, spoke in the highest terms of the value and variety of Papuan woods. Among those specially noted were sixteen varieties suitable for beams, girders, railway waggons, or other positions in which a heavy strain is encountered; ten suitable for carriage building; fifteen suitable for joinery, lining, and flooring; and fourteen woods of great beauty, suited to furniture and cabinet work. The cedar of the country is exceptionally well fitted for boat-building, and one of the canoe woods, the "ilimo," found up to five or six feet in diameter, would probably be valuable to yacht builders, from its notable lightness and strength. The "mahia," the "ohabu," and the "oma" are also good boat-building woods. The "kasi-kasi," "porou," "mariau," and "togara" have the very valuable property of being incorrodible in water and resistant to the attacks of marine insects. They have been used for piles with much success.



Very many of the hardwoods are reported as suitable for sleepers and street paving blocks. There is plenty of cedar to be had ; the sandalwood is almost used up, but some still remains. Woods resembling mahogany, rosewood, satinwood ; woods that are dark red or deep yellow in colour, full of natural oils, hard almost as iron, and so heavy as to sink in water, fine and firm of grain as box, light and tough as pine, are to be found among the treasures of the forests. There are also many woods that are known to produce dyes and gums, but it is not yet known what their commercial value may be.

At the present time, anyone who likes is at liberty to cut and carry away these valuable woods for practically nothing. The charge made by the Government for the use of timber lands—10s. per 100 acres—is only intended to prevent anyone taking up more land than he can make use of. There is a regulation obliging every lessee of timber areas to put up a saw-mill within a reasonable period ; but this is what the timber speculator would naturally wish to do in his own interests.

It is impossible to say what any man might make out of the almost untouched timbers of Papua, because no one has as yet made a fair trial. But certain facts speak for themselves.

Australian timbers are being so rapidly worked out that material for building is in some cases beginning to run short. It must be remembered that wood, not brick or stone, is the chief building material of all



*Photo W. H. Hiltner.*

## LABOURERS IN THE GOLD-FIELDS

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Australasia outside the towns, and that this creates an enormous and constant demand. Papua—at one point only ninety miles from the Australian continent—is in an excellent position to satisfy this demand. At the present moment, however, sawn timber is actually being imported into Papua from Australia at very high prices for building purposes, because as yet the local supply cannot be got at. Without sawmills, the immense virgin forests are as useless as so much grass, although they lie right along the course of all the great rivers, in many cases so close up that the timber-getter has nothing to do but cut his trees and let them drop into the stream, where they will be floated to the sea.

This curious condition of affairs—a country rich in timber buying it at a high price from a country which is beginning to run short—cannot in the nature of things last much longer. There are several fortunes waiting for the people who first bring about a change. In the present quickly developing state of the country all the sawn timber available will be taken up by local needs for a good while to come; but there are still greater possibilities in the future, when the huge forests are really opened up and Papua becomes, as it undoubtedly will, the chief source of supply for the paving, carpentering, and paper-making needs of the Australasian world.

The gold mines of Papua have had much to do with the history of the colony. It is an open question whether Papua owes them more of good or of

ill. On the one side, it may be said that the miners and prospectors drew attention to the country, that they have done a great deal of valuable exploring work, and that they provide the greater part of the revenues. On the other must be set the count that the enormous death-rate on the fields in the days of the early rushes—a death-rate not by any means all due to climatic influences—gave the country a bad name, from which it has not even yet recovered. If Papua has been, and is, described as “The White Man’s Grave”—if insurance companies fight shy of it and Government clerks going to take up a place in the Port Moresby offices are seen off by weeping friends who count them as good as dead—it is very largely due to the horrors of the early mining days. In the eighties and nineties men died like flies in the steaming forests of Woodlark and up the wild, inaccessible rivers of the mainland, hunting for the gold that could not bring them a minute’s longer life once the fever fiend had laid good hold of their enfeebled bodies.

Want of proper food, absence of decent lodging, neglect of precautions against chill, against mosquitoes, against sun and rain, had quite as much to do with the terrible mortality among the early miners as the fevers themselves. The general public, however, did not discriminate, and the tale of horror that came down from the Yodda, the Mambaré, and other well-known fields were applied equally to Port Moresby, where white people enjoy excellent health,

or to Samarai, from which fever has been completely weeded out.

Health on the goldfields is now quite satisfactory. Fever, it is true, is not unknown, but it is not of a bad type, and will probably disappear when the food supply is improved.

But the effect of the early death-rate will hamper the country for many a long day yet. The public is loth to relinquish its horrors, and a New Guinea where sensational and startling fevers do not carry off half the population every year seems flat and uninteresting compared with the lurid country of the stay-at-home imagination.

The mining interest is to the full as important as the planter interest at the time of writing. Papua is a country exceedingly rich in valuable minerals. Gold has been sought, and successfully, for more than twenty years. Copper exists in large and paying fields. Other minerals are known to exist, but have not been prospected for. Coal has lately been discovered. The mining industry, however, is severely handicapped by want of capital. All the gold hitherto found on the mainland is alluvial; reef gold is known to exist, but prospecting is costly work in a country of extremely rugged conformation covered with dense forest. At all the mining centres one hears the same story—excellent possibilities, but not money enough to attain them. The beds of some of the rivers are known to contain gold in large quantities, but the strong currents and numerous rapids have prevented

any attempts at dredging, which is at best a costly process. Gold has been taken in moderate quantities from Woodlark Island for many years, and of late a small company has done some reef mining. There remains a rich underlying bed, which is, however, too deep to get at without serious expenditure, and no one seems anxious to expend. New Guinea is too far away; it has a bad reputation; there are plenty of established and well-paying mines in Australia. So the capitalist says. In the meantime the gold lies there ungetatable.

There were 162 white miners in the country during 1907-8, employing over a thousand native labourers (in Papua the miner does not do his own digging, but employs a number of indentured "boys"). The value of gold cleared was only about £52,000, but there is good reason to think that at least as much again was actually obtained. This sum was of course very irregularly distributed, some men making a great deal, and others again very little. Mining in Papua is rather a costly business. The best paying fields are for the most part many days' journey into the interior, and the interior cannot be reached without a train of carriers, an outfit of tents and camping apparatus, and a supply of food enough for a good many people during the march out and back. Much of the loss of life among the old prospectors was due to the fact that they insisted on treating New Guinea like Australia, and started out up the deadly Mambaré River or into the Louisiade bush with

scarce any outfit beyond the traditional swag and billycan.

All said, however, the miners continue to make a fair living out of their occupation, and many of them believe that it can only be a question of time until rich discoveries are made. A gold rush to Papua is no new thing, but the next (so the miners say) will be better justified than those of 1889 and 1896.

The reports of the copper fields are, of course, "very encouraging," after the manner of mining reports all the world over. There is, however, solid fact at the back of the encouragement. Not to trouble the non-mining reader with technicalities, it may be briefly said that the copper in Papua is of a quality that pays excellently in Australia, but that does not pay in the country for want of smelting plant. No matter how rich your ore may be, it is scarcely a profitable business to ship it at high rates of freight to another country and pay someone else a good deal to extract the metal when the whole operation could and should be done at the mouth of the mine. By the time these lines are in print, however, it is probable that the want will have been remedied.

The copper fields are within a few miles of Port Moresby, upon the one good road which the country boasts. Many claims have been taken up, mostly by people who cannot afford to work them, but a good deal more remains to be found and taken possession of in the surrounding country. A curious and



certainly an easy method of prospecting has been employed by one or two residents of the country. The Papuan native, like most savages, is very observant, even of things that he does not understand. If you give him a lump of copper ore and promise him a pound of stick tobacco for any more that he can pick up about the hills or in the bush, he will find copper for you, should there be any within tramping distance of where he lives. Some of the Port Moresby natives, who have keen trading and money-making instincts, have in this way learned to prospect for themselves, and more than one native has made a good deal out of his mining rights by selling them to white speculators.

Take it all in all, the mineral wealth of Papua is enough to furnish very good opportunities of money-making to any man with a thousand or two to spend, but it is more immediately profitable and safer to develop existing discoveries than to go prospecting after new ones. This is not likely to deter the man who loves change, chance, and adventure from going gold-hunting. The possible prizes of the gold-hunter are great, and of adventure and discovery he will have enough to satisfy Marco Polo himself. There is not a miner in the country who cannot tell you of a gold-bearing district that is still unprospected—perhaps actually unvisited, its auriferous qualities being guessed by the appearance of the surrounding country. The Government, which has rather more than enough to do with its small income.



*Photo IV. Whitten.*

CARRIERS ON THE WAY TO THE GOLD-MINES

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as things are, yet manages to squeeze out a few hundreds occasionally for prospecting work and to keep a reward standing of £1000 for the discovery of a new field. To go and hunt up possible gold-fields in Papua costs anything from £500 or £600 upwards after landing at Port Moresby or Samarai. Experienced prospectors, wise in everything but the art of keeping their gold when they find it, are always ready to guide a trip of the kind. Prospecting and exploring are inextricably mixed up in Papua; the gold-seeker is sure to find a new tribe or two, a mountain that nobody has seen, a branch or source of some great river—one cannot say what the surprises of the interior may be. As a rule, the prospector passes these things over with simple contempt. He has no use for them—you cannot eat a mountain range if your boys are short of food, and rivers that deposit no gold upon their shores are mere nuisances. . . . When one thinks of the medals and the fellowships and the lectures and the interviews claimed and given by men who have followed up a new bit of an old river through a valley that not quite everyone knows, or climbed an unknown inferior peak of a mountain whose main crest has been worn by the feet of travellers for generations, one wonders at the modesty of many of these miner-explorers. Nothing stops them in the search for gold. There is a perpendicular cliff 300 feet high, shutting in the end of a river valley in the far interior, which is garlanded to this day with the

decaying vestiges of a ladder made of wild vines and lawyer cane, put up by a hardy band of pioneers who wanted to get to the end of the valley and did not see why a trifle of that kind should prevent them. It is on record that the ladder remained in its place for a long time, being used *as a road* by miners travelling to and fro, and that a certain prospector, travelling thither from easier countries, was exceedingly grieved when he saw it, insomuch that he turned back and went home again, declaring that a place where they called that thing "a road" was no place for him.

. . . . .

So much, then, for the money-making possibilities of Papua. If some of my readers have found this chapter a little dry I do not apologize to them, since it is open to every man to skip what he does not care for. Others, I know, will have read it with interest, for the pioneering spirit yet runs strong in the English race, and keys to open the doors to a wider and freer life than that of our own safe and comfortable little islands are eagerly sought by many.

## CHAPTER VI

The wizard and the crocodile—Training for sorcery—The Great Fly River—To Thursday Island—The pearl fishers—"Walking alone in the depths of the sea"—Wicked Goari-Bari—Willie and the soap—The scene of Chalmers' murder—A bit of boiled man—The rescue of Chalmers' bones—The incredible West—Very nearly an adventure—The hysterical man-eaters—Order of the Imperial Shirt—The loyalty of Kaimari.

**I**N Papua, when you see two or three residents talking together, you may safely guess that one of three subjects occupies their attention—crocodiles, sorcery, or the *Merrie England*.

I do not know why one talks so much about crocodiles. The number of white men known to have been taken by them could be counted on the fingers of one hand. They are very seldom seen, although there the waters of rivers and seas alike are infested with them. They do not damage the crops, and seldom eat a labourer. Nevertheless the interest taken by the white resident of Papua in the crocodile is little short of passionate. In the absence of daily papers, the latest crocodile gossip is retailed from mouth to mouth, and the movements of any well-known specimen are canvassed like those of British royalty. The twenty-footer that came ashore at two in the morning under the houses of Hanuabada

village, glittering with green phosphorescence, and grabbed a native dog; the monster that was seen tearing a dead mule to pieces in the shallow of the swamp by the shooting butts; even the black oily streak that was seen crossing the bay yesterday morning, are discussed with every variety of detail. A crocodile is seen in the distance, out at sea, swimming along with a pig in its jaws, and the whole of the capital musters on the jetty, rifle in hand, as though the safety of their verandahs and homes (one does not have hearths in Papua) trembled in the balance. The crocodile is fired at a dozen times and very much frightened, drops its well-earned dinner, and dives below. Half a dozen amateur Tells claim the credit of the deed; the dead and mangled pig comes ashore in the afternoon of the next day, rather "high," and the armed native constabulary banquet upon it. . . . The incident provides gossip for a week.

If crocodiles are not the subject of conversation, the latest cases of sorcery no doubt occupy the field. Sorcery is in the very air of Papua. Your cook-boy will probably explain an unauthorised absence by the excuse that the sorcerer who lives next door put a spell on him so that he could not go out of the house. The little brown lady in a brief frilled skirt and nothing else who does your washing will tell you quite calmly, when you ask how she came by a deformed shin-bone, that she met a "spilit stop long bush" (apparition walking in the forest), whom she

judged to be a disembodied sorcerer of great power, since his mere look at her bent her leg almost in two . . . and there is the leg to prove it. The highly intelligent mission-trained youth who "does out the rooms" in your friend's bungalow will give notice and retreat to his palm shanty in the bush because his master showed him a conjuring trick of the six-in-a-box-for-a-shilling kind, and he is quite certain that the Taubada (chief) was practising sorcery on him. It is not by any means a joke, this question of sorcery. The Government recognises it as a crime, and punishes it by a long term of imprisonment—justly, too, since the sorcerer is almost always a murderer as well, and the practice of sorcery, with its attendant petty tyrannies, cruelties, and extortion, does more than anything else to keep the native in a state of savagery.

The Psychical Research Society would have its hands full in Papua. Nearly all the well-known though rare phenomena which exercise the attention of the members in England flourish in wild luxuriance among the Papuans. Spirit-rapping, as I have already said, is common both among the Purari tribes and elsewhere. Ghosts are constantly seen, being variously described as men, as indefinite "debil-debils," and as white or blue lights hovering above the surface of the ground. The sorcerers claim power to raise the dead, and the natives are quite convinced that they do. In connection with this it may be interesting to give an illustration.



I had been some weeks in Port Moresby, and was anxious if possible to see something of the sorcerers' powers. Two retired practitioners of wide reputation were induced to come up on to the verandah of the house where I was staying and give an exhibition of their feats, being first assured that the Government had granted leave. They said that they would kill something and bring it to life again—a dog or a cat, or anything I wished.

I suggested a lizard, knowing the cruel nature of the Papuan, and judging that they were less likely to mis-handle an insensitive cold-blooded reptile than a lively dog. The sorcerers—two middle-aged men with dark sly faces—disappeared among the cook-house buildings at the back, and returned with a small lizard, recently killed, and still warm. It seemed to have been put an end to by a blow, as it was not outwardly injured. The sorcerers squatted down on the floor with the lizard lying between them, and began stroking it with their finger-tips, much as if they were trying to mesmerise it. They continued doing this for some time, muttering to themselves and breathing hard. At the end of a few minutes they sat up and declared the charm would not work. It was not their fault, they said—they had not done any sorcery for a long time, and were out of training. To be sure of success they should have trained for a week at least.

How did they train? I asked.

They practised various ceremonies, it seemed, and

they ate a great deal of wild ginger. There was nothing like ginger for giving you magic powers.

The cook-boy said that this was undeniably true, for if you tied ginger on your gun when going out to shoot wallaby or alligators, it was much more likely to shoot straight. Also, when they wanted to make their dogs run very fast they put ginger down the animals' throats.

The connection between cause and effect here did not seem to require magic to help it out ; however, I let it pass without comment, as I wanted to hear some more. But the cook-boy had a roast of kangaroo to attend to, so he went away, as the amusement of the morning seemed over.

The sorcerers gathered themselves up, accepted a gift of tobacco, and went off to the village. It seemed as if the experiment had been a complete failure, and yet——

And yet—I remembered that the two old villains looked genuinely and unmistakably disappointed when the lizard did not revive. Nothing was clearer than the fact that they thought it would. I did not suppose that the Papuan sorcerer possessed any power over the mysteries of life and death, still——

What about anæsthetics ? The tale of the man who was killed and brought to life again by the local sorcerer is one of the commonest "yarns" of a New Guinea village. In nineteen cases out of twenty it is probably untrue. There may be something in the twentieth, and that something may be the use of a

native anæsthetic, not known to the people in general.

In any case, the incident added to the material available for the three subjects of local conversation. And this brings me to the third—the *Merrie England*.

If no one is discussing alligator gossip or retailing spicy bits of sorcery, the Government steam yacht is sure to be the subject of conversation. The regular mail boats, which come up from Australia at intervals of about three weeks, do not furnish much food for talk, as everyone knows just what they are going to do. But the *Merrie England* may go anywhere and do anything. She runs down the coast to punish a cannibal raid in the "Wild West"; she goes to chase a Jap schooner that has been poaching about the pearl fisheries; she takes stores to a far-out station, or lays buoys along a dangerous passage in the coral reef near a port, or runs suddenly south to Thursday Island with despatches, or brings a party of explorers to their "jumping-off place" and bids them good luck and good-bye. She is a man-of-war, a passenger steamer, a cargo tramp, a Court of Justice, and a Government House. Trials are held in her saloon, meetings of the Legislative Council—Papua's Parliament—take place there; the Governor and his modest suite of two private secretaries, six native boatmen, and a couple of Papuan valets spend more time on the yacht than in the house with the Union Jack flying above, outside Port Moresby. The *Merrie England* carries mails, brings news, transfers officials,

and incidentally gives everyone something to talk about most of the time—an incalculable boon in an isolated colony with mails three weeks apart.

She is a handsome little ship, some 190 tons register, built originally as a sailing yacht and later converted to a steamer. She has been twenty years at work about the Territory, but is still going well. It was inevitable that I should make her acquaintance sooner or later, and indeed it was not many weeks after my arrival that I found myself in one of her pretty gilded and looking-glassed cabins, bound on a long trip West.

Part of that trip has already been told. It was from the *Merrie England* that I went up the Purari delta to study the labour question. After our return she went on down the coast, across the Gulf of Papua, to Daru.

Daru, the port of entry and seat of Government for the Western Division, is not an interesting place in itself. At high tide it is a jetty, a handful of mangroves, a grass street, and half a dozen tin bungalows. At low tide (and in defiance of all the rules of physical geography tides seem to be oftener out than in at Daru) it is a black swamp emblazoned with crabs and weeds, the town an indefinite addendum somewhere in the distance. I have heard Daru called pretty, but it is a poisonous-looking prettiness at best—flaming toadstool-coloured croton bushes in rows, grass and bush much too green, soil too black, sun too brilliant for anything with a hide inferior in

resistant qualities to that of a basking alligator. Daru is not healthy, and not unhealthy. There is some malaria there, but nothing like so much as one might expect from the surroundings. Indeed, all over the western and gulf districts Papua gives the lie to quite a number of theories of hygiene. Bevan, the explorer of the eighties, long ago noticed with astonishment the excellent health and fine physique of the delta tribes, who live literally in a sea of rotting swamp, where, by all the laws of ordinary hygienic science, they ought merely to die.

It is the surroundings of Daru that lend the little town any interest it possesses. In the first place, it is situated on an islet at the mouth of the Fly, and the Fly is one of the largest and most important rivers in the world. Like every other Papuan river, it is known only for a certain distance. In this case the sphere of the explorer extends over 500 miles, but no one knows where the stream rises, and the upper reaches, though navigable to steamers of a good size, are very seldom visited.

There is no white settlement along the Fly. Land there is in plenty, lying a very little way back from the river, and not apparently used by the natives, except in certain districts, where the great extent and regularity of the Papuan banana groves has excited the admiration of all the travellers—they are not many—who have visited the great river. Sugar country is found along the Fly inferior to none in the world. There is open grass country a few miles



*Photo W. Whitten.*

A WIDOW'S WEEDS: FLY RIVER

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beyond the banks in many districts. The river provides a matchless water-way for the conveyance of produce to market, and the lower part of the estuary is within a day's steam of Australia. Still, for all that no one expects to see the Fly country settled yet. It is too far away.

There are no white people at all in the huge Western Division, save two Government officials and half a dozen traders and missionaries. The country has an ill reputation, scarcely correct as regards health, but as regards the natives something truer. You are not in the comfortable plantation country, with its mail steamers and its known and mapped divisions, and its useful, tractable natives, when you get into the Wild West. This is Papua very much in the rough, as yet.

No one can doubt, all the same, that this mighty river will be a highway of traffic some day. We did not visit it in the *Merrie England*. We did not even see it, though we were lying in its estuary a night and a day—for the estuary is over eighty miles wide, and you are quite out of sight of the shore, anchored in the midst of this great river mouth. But you can infer the nearness of the Fly when you look at the yellow flood of fresh water on which the steamer is floating, and you are not surprised to hear, amazing though it seems, that the Fly River pours forth every twenty-four hours into the Gulf of Papua enough water to give every man, woman, and child in the world an allowance of sixty gallons twice over, sixty



gallons being the accepted standard in places where water is plentiful.

From Daru and the West we ran over to Thursday Island—only eighteen hours, even at the seven-knot pace of the leisurely *Merrie England*—and found ourselves once more in Australian territory.

If you wish to find Thursday Island on the map, you must follow the huge peninsula of North Queensland with your eye right to the end, and mark down a tiny speck lying close to the edge, among the big islands of Torres Straits—Mulgrave, Banks, Prince of Wales, and Horn. Thursday lies close to Prince of Wales' Island, and is almost dwarfed out of sight by its neighbour, but it is much the more important place, all the same. All the big islands are almost uninhabited; little Thursday, however, has a town and a barracks and a fort and quite a number of calling steamers. It is the centre of the great pearling industry of North Queensland, and keeps a good-sized fleet of pearlers constantly at work.

The place looked like nothing in the world so much as a small, bright, painted view inside a glass paperweight when we came up to it in the full morning light. The clear air cast a crystalline sparkle over the green central hill, and the red and white town climbing up its slopes, and the fiery blue sky and flat blue sea. Thin black masts of sloops and schooners stood out like sharp pen-strokes against the hill and the town in rows as thick as rushes. The fleet was laid up in the harbour, for there was a strike on



*Photo W. Whitten.*

FLY RIVER FOLK

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among the lessees of the boats, and no one was going out to dive. In consequence we saw practically nothing of the chief industry of Thursday Island. We could not, indeed, have come at a worse time.

The *Merrie England*, however, had come over on Government business, and did not concern herself about the doings of the fleet. While her officials were busy in the saloon with mails I went for a walk about the town and saw what was to be seen.

It was a most bewildering place. If I had not known I was in Australian territory, I should certainly have thought that the *Merrie England* had made a mistake and landed me somewhere in Japan. Japanese were the yellow-faced, under-sized men in ill-fitting slop-made suits who passed up and down the pretty boulevarded streets. Japanese were the women in kimono and obi, with puffed and oiled black hair, who sat on the verandahs of the rickety tin-roofed houses or walked in and out of the shops with their quaint little slant-eyed children buying groceries and prints. Japanese were the shops themselves, full of sandals and crapes and silks for the most part, with a few inferior and costly European goods thrown in, the whole presided over by a yellow little man in an unbecoming black suit—unless by chance the shopkeeper was a tall Chinese in a blouse, with a thin pigtail hanging down his back. Of the celebrated courtesy and grace of Japan the Thursday Island Jap emigrant knows nothing. He has taken up the footpath in groups of threes and fours, and it

goes hard but he will make you turn off into the mud for him if he can. He is not too anxious to serve you if you patronise his shop (with one exception—a very smart and businesslike little yellow heathen, who appears to have most of the European custom in his hands, and deserves it), but gives you to understand as clearly as he can that he is conferring a favour on you in accepting your money. He is superior to the white in numbers, as there are about two thousand Japanese and Chinese in the little Island, and only seven hundred Europeans or Australians. The truth is—and it is not a pleasant truth for Australia—that Thursday Island practically belongs to Japan. The pearling trade has gradually slipped into Japanese hands, and practically all the boats at the time of my visit were owned directly or indirectly by Japanese. The costliness of white labour is supposed to be the chief reason. Whatever the cause may be, the fact is regrettable, for the pearl and the shell of Thursday Island, even in these days of diminished takings, are worth very many thousands a year. Twenty-three thousand pounds is the average value of the pearls alone, and they are much the least part of the profit, the shell—which sells at any price you like to mention from £50 to £200 a ton—being the chief stand-by of the trade.

As it was impossible to see the pearling fleet at work, I was constrained to do the next best thing—take a trip on a sloop owned (for once) by a white man and see how the diving was done. Mr. and

Mrs. F——, residents of Thursday Island, very kindly offered to take me for the trip, and further pressed upon me the loan of a diving dress to go down and see for myself what the bottom of the sea looked like.

I wanted very much to go down over the pearling grounds, but my hosts assured me that this was impossible. They are pearling now at Thursday Island in a very great depth of water, the shallower places having been fished out, and even experienced divers find the pressure of a hundred feet and more most trying. It would scarcely be safe, I was told ; and as to another diver going down to ensure against accident, that was the very way to bring them about : life-lines and air-tubes got tangled, the pumps were easier to manage for one than two—in fine, I had better go down in shallower water, and I should find it best to go by myself.

So it was agreed ; and the little sloop was towed out a mile or two beyond the town to a spot only a few fathoms deep, where it was agreed that I might safely make my diving debut.

Now, Torres Straits, as everyone in Queensland knows, is full of sharks, common and tiger, and also of alligators, devil-fish, sting-ray, and various other unpleasant creatures. I could not help thinking about them a little as we cast anchor over the selected place and began to prepare the diving gear. It is considered rather bad form and rather silly to make a fuss about sharks and alligators in the

countries where they abound ; still, I ventured a timid inquiry.

"Oh, that's all right," I was told ; "the alligators don't take this track crossing the Straits ; and as for the sharks, accidents are very uncommon—very uncommon ; besides, this is not a likely place. If by any chance you should see a shark, don't be the least alarmed ; just pull up the cuff of your jumper a little so as to let out a few bubbles of air, and he'll be frightened off. Don't pull the cord till he is well away ; you're all right on the bottom, but they have been known to make a grab at a man when he was being pulled up—as they do at a fish on your line, you know—and bite his boots off. I don't suppose for a minute you'll see one, however."

All this was so businesslike and so thoughtful, and the men were so kindly and carefully preparing the pumps and looking to the tubes and putting the ladder in the easiest place for me to get over, that it was impossible to be scared, so of course I was not. I did not feel like myself—like someone else, rather, whom I had only recently met and did not care for—but I was not scared. I thought a good deal about a French model dress and hat I had been tempted into buying in Melbourne, and wished I had been less chary of wearing it, because now . . . But I was not scared. I wished I had told the captain of the *Merrie England* about the piece I had burned out of one of his inestimable varnished floors, and asked him not to grieve for it, or me, or something—it

seemed a little involved, but I was not scared. . . .  
I reflected. . . .

"Now, if you'll come down into the cabin, I'll help you into your dress," said my hostess cheerily. And I went, because I was not at all frightened.

Mrs. F—— is a tall, powerfully-built Australian, with muscles equal to a man's. It takes two people, as a rule, to get another into a diving dress, but she managed to push and punch and kick me into mine unaided—no mean feat of athletics, as anyone who has ever seen a diver's toilet will understand.

First of all came a jersey and tights of white wool nearly half an inch thick. I got into these without difficulty, as they were large and loose, but the heat in that torrid atmosphere made me fairly gasp. I was assured, however, that the warm clothing was very necessary down under water if one wanted to avoid chills.

Then came the real difficulty. The diving suit itself—an all-over garment, with legs, feet, and sleeves all made of stiff thick rubber-cloth—was produced, and I was told I had to crawl in feet foremost through the neck!

It was done at last, an inch at a time, with pauses for rest, and two panting creatures climbed out on deck, one in a cool white dress and hat, the other in a shapeless shambling sort of costume that made her look like a toad with a tendency to apoplexy.

I sat down on the hatch, and two "tenders," as they were called (men who look after the diving gear),



completed my toilet. They took a pair of rubber-cloth boots with lead soles that weighed twenty pounds each and put them on my feet. They got a wrench, pulled up the metal yoke of my dress tight round my neck, and screwed me into it by means of nuts. Then they brought a mass of copper and iron that seemed a fair load for a horse and clapped it over my head. This was the helmet. The glasses were not yet screwed on, so I could look out of the windows and wonder what was going to happen next, and how I was ever going to move a limb encased in all that panoply of metal. I felt a sympathy I had never known before—for the knights of mediæval days cased in unyielding steel, for a lonely lobster prisoned in its carapace, for birds shut up in hard, uncomfortable eggshells, for everything that was screwed tight into something and couldn't get out. Meanwhile the tenders went on tending. They took the big end of the wrench and more nuts and screwed my helmet down on to the metal yoke, hauling on their tools and pressing the nuts home as if they were never to be loosened any more. Then they let go and told me to try and walk.

I got up, feeling like a fly that had fallen into a treacle-dish, and slowly dragged one heavy foot after another, six steps a minute across the deck. This created much satisfaction. The diving dress is constructed on the principle of giving you just as much weight as you can support, and sometimes a weak diver finds it too much and cannot move in the costume at all.

All the same, I had to crawl very slowly to the bulwarks, where the industrious tenders had hung the ladder, and I was glad to hear that the necklace of lead weights, weighing forty pounds, which I had already been eyeing uncomfortably, was not to be put on till the last moment.

My host was busy with the air-pump, looking over the length of rubber tubing carefully, seeing that the machinery was in good order, and assuring me—rather too emphatically, I thought—that he meant to take charge of the pump himself and let the tenders merely watch the line. I did not know how grateful I ought to have been, but I learned all about that later on. Three-fourths of the accidents that put an end to divers occur through carelessness on the part of the man at the pump. When the diver is below, a tender is deputed to keep the life-line and air-tube clear and make sure that all signals are instantly seen. It is a serious business this diving, and nobody treats it like play.

The use of the line and valves was explained to me. The rope fastened round my waist was meant to let me down and haul me up. The smaller line, fastened to my helmet and dropping in front, was to be kept in my hand. There were a lot of signals one could make with it, but I had better not try to learn them, they would only confuse me. I could recollect that a good pull on this line meant “I want to come up”—that was all that was necessary. As for the valve, it was turned one way to increase the air supply,

another to lessen it. Now, was I ready to get over the side ?

I repeat that I was not afraid. Is it being afraid to wish oneself in bed at home with the blankets pulled up over one's ears and the door locked ? Is it being afraid to call oneself a fool, softly and silently, and say that never, never again . . . ? Is it being afraid if one thinks suddenly and strangely of dentists' waiting-rooms and the horrible nod that beckons you forth from your uneasy seat and the dread command to "open a little wider" ? Certainly not.

They lifted my feet for me and put them down singly on the ladder. They helped me a step or two down into the water. They took that horrible lead necklace and laid it gently, almost caressingly, round my copper and iron neck. And then they said "Good-bye," and put the glass window in, and screwed down the coffin—I mean the helmet. Their faces were faint through the glass, but they smiled and signalled (for I could hear no longer), and I knew that they were asking "Are you ready ?"

It is at this point that the novice usually clutches hold of the rail and insists on being taken back. It was at this point that my fiction broke up, and I realised that I was extremely afraid. The sober truth, I think, is that a woman always is afraid of doing dangerous things. Generally she lies about it, partly through conceit, and largely because she is curious and does not mind being horribly afraid if you will give her what she wants. But the truth is as I have

said. The cold courage of the male—the Nelson courage that “never saw fear”—is not in any woman who ever was born. We take our risks as the Botany Bay convict took his walks—with a shrinking brute irrevocably chained to our side, dragging it wherever we go.

The brute disliked that dive. It hated the plunge to the bottom—scarcely thirty feet, but it might have been a thousand—that followed when I carefully slid those gigantic boots off the ladder. It was disgusted when I landed—as all beginners do—on my head, and had to struggle to get right. It told me that my hands were bare and that sharks could nip them off, and that I had no knife as a diver should have, and that there might be “something” in every black cavern of the dead coral over which I found myself walking. But it got interested in the surroundings by and by and forgot to nag.

After all, it was worth some trouble and discomfort to find oneself walking on the bottom of Torres Straits, down where the divers had been at work a year or two ago, seeing just what they saw when they went out for their day’s strange labour, all but the pearl-shell, which had of course been taken away. The water chanced not to be very clear, and the bottom was so weedy that one was simply walking in a green garden of weeds half-way up to the knee. But there was a little coral to be seen, pearly white among the weeds (it was dead coral—a living bed is a veritable flower-garden of vivid colours), and the

light that came down from above, dim and green and softly diffused, showed the surroundings plainly enough.

It is a strange sensation this "walking alone in the depths of the sea," and one that I think no one could describe adequately. To get away from the laws of gravity as you have known them all your life is in itself a somewhat disorganising experience. And the laws of gravity do not act at the bottom of the seas as they do on land. All that weight of lead and iron that you bore so painfully up on deck barely suffices down here to keep you on the ground. You walk with strange, soft, striding steps ; your arms and legs obey your will, but slowly and after consideration. Everything is muffled—your movements, your breath, your sight, your hearing. You do not feel awake ; you are not sure that you are alive. The pump beats in your ears like a huge pulse, but you feel it rather than hear it. You are conscious that your nose and ears are hurting you, and that your lungs do not feel as they ought, but it seems somebody else's pain rather than yours. Fish swim past you, green and grey in the green water. You realise with something of a shock that they are not afraid of you. On the deck of the sloop, the mere shadow of your hand would send them flying as they glide past the ship's counter, but here in the depths of the sea they fin their slow way up to the very windows of your helmet, and look in at you with their cold glassy eyes, unafraid. You stretch out a hand to grasp

them, and they avoid it quietly and without haste. You look ahead through the darkling water for the swoop and rush and horrible scythe-shaped tail of the monster that you fear, but there is no sign of it. . . . Still—you have been down some minutes now, and honour is amply satisfied. It would be very pleasant to see the light of day again. . . . You stoop down, slowly and “disposedly,” as one moves under water, and gather up a bit of weed and a fragment of coral for a souvenir ; and then you pull the cord.

No sensation of movement follows, and for a moment your heart stands still. Has the tender forgotten to tend after all ? . . . But in another second you notice that the air bubbles are rushing in a long stream past the windows of your prison, and you realise that you must be going although you do not feel it. . . . The rungs of the ladder appear, glide downwards, vanish. The light suddenly brightens—you are up !

It is easy to catch the bulwark and stand on the top of the ladder while the tender unscrews your helmet-glass. And the sweetness of that first rush of warm tropic air breaking upon your cold, perspiring face and going in a grateful rush right down your swollen lungs is a thing to be thankful for evermore. The undressing is full as trying a job as the dressing ; as you were squeezed and pounded into the costume, so you have to be dragged and pinched out of it when the tenders have done unscrewing the endless nuts and have taken off the leaden jewellery and removed

the mighty boots. But you are so glad to be out again and alive again that you do not care.

It was interesting to hear during our short stay at Thursday Island that the shell was by no means so completely fished out as reports of the day had declared. True, most of the good shell is now at the bottom of those depths of two hundred feet and more into which no diver can venture, but it is not all out of reach. Enough shallow water shell remains to keep a good-sized fleet at work. If we had only been there sooner or later, we could have gone out and seen the divers working ; but this pleasure was denied us.

Instead, one had to content oneself with the pearling gossip that floated about every verandah universal as tobacco-smoke. Home people are apt to think that the chief interest of a pearling-station lies in the pearls ; but this is not the case at all. Pearls are regarded as an extra something that you cannot rely on ; you may get them, and you may not ; but in any case the shell is there, and your divers cannot steal that. Many boats are let to Japanese, who are allowed to take all the pearls that are found and sell the shell to the owners of the boat at £80 a ton. The price of this commodity varies a great deal, as it is chiefly used for articles of dress and fancy goods, which are constantly affected by fashion. Still, the £80 leaves a large profit.

The pearls are mostly bought by dealers in Thurs-

day Island. Pearl-doctoring is thoroughly understood and constantly done by the buyers. It is not in any way an illegitimate process, any more than is the cutting and polishing of a gem. Pearls are sometimes skinned to give them a finer lustre ; the irregular formation known among jewellers as "baroque" pearl is occasionally trimmed into useful shapes, and "blister" pearls are sometimes destroyed on the chance of finding something better inside. Indeed, the blister pearl is quite a fascinating form of speculation. It is generally unattractive to look at—a flattish, irregular mass that can only be set in some fanciful way for a cheap pendant or brooch—and one has little compunction in sacrificing this form of gem. But sometimes it is good-looking enough, well-coloured, and worth a fair sum ; and then the question arises, Is it worth while to cut the pearl up or not ? If the answer is in the affirmative, the buyer carefully chisels off the outer skin, goes a little deeper, and finds—perhaps an empty blister worth nothing at all now, perhaps a beautiful, large, regular pearl, loose inside or lightly attached to the walls of the covering formation. Some of the finest pearls ever sent out of Thursday Island have been discovered in this way. How many ladies, one wonders, are carrying about gems worth hundreds of pounds, unknown and unsuspected, inside the irregular shell of the cheap "baroque" pearl that makes up their "new art" necklace pendant ?

We had only a flying visit to Thursday Island, for



there was work for the *Merrie England* to do all along the coast, and time was flying. The second day found the Government yacht under steam again, gliding northward to Papua through the bright green coral islets of Torres Straits. We were bound now for no less a place than Goari-Bari—the scene of Chalmers' murder in 1901, and of the much-discussed fight in the year 1904 that led to the suicide of the Chief Justice.

There had been no call at Goari-Bari for two years past, and no one knew just what frame of mind the natives might be in. Their reputation has always been one of the worst, and they are as treacherous as they are cruel and cowardly. The Governor expressed his intention of making a peaceful call, but it must be allowed that no one on the ship thought His Excellency's desire very likely of fulfilment.

We steamed up to the island in the forenoon and cast anchor about a mile from the village ; nearer the *Merrie England's* draught would not allow her to go. The famous, or infamous, Goari-Bari lay right before us—a long, low, swampy island near the mouth of a great river (the Aird), with a row of ill-constructed brown huts showing prominently on the mud of the foreshore. The sky was yellow-grey, low, and hot, the sea lumpy and choppy ; the wind blew strong, but it had no freshness in it. An ugly day, an ugly place.

For an hour or two the *Merrie England* waited, and then, greatly daring, one or two canoes stole out from

the town and paddled near us. Our interpreter called to them, assuring them of our friendly intention and displaying calico and tobacco. But for a considerable time the Goari-Barians hesitated, paddling up and down excitedly in their canoes, chattering like parrots, shivering with excitement—ready at any moment either to grasp the arrows in the bottoms of the canoes or to turn tail and rush for shore. They were the ugliest crowd I had yet seen in the country—naked, save for a scrap of bark or fibre; lean and ungraceful, their heads shaved bare to the middle, with a bunch of greasy curls hanging out behind, their faces painted with red stripes and patches. Feathers streamed and grass armlets fluttered about their restless persons; they were jumpy, excitable, and (to use an Americanism) “skeery” almost beyond belief.

This was my first, but not my last, visit to the Aird River cannibals, and I had plenty of opportunity later for confirming the first impressions made by these strange people. In Papua, more truly than in any other country in the world, it may be said that nothing happens save the unexpected. But the experience I had already had of the Country of the Impossible did not prepare me for the Aird River people. The popular and apparently the reasonable idea of a cannibal is that he is the fiercest of human beasts, warlike, fearless, and determined, knowing nothing of nerves, nothing of feeling—a creature of iron. . . .

Instead of which, he is the most hysterical, the most nervous, twittery, jumpy, wire-hung creature that ever existed outside of a ladies' boarding-school. If you hold out a finger, he starts. If you speak suddenly, he squeaks. If you look fixedly at him for a few seconds, he vanishes into the bush so swiftly and silently that you are half convinced he never was there at all. It is extraordinarily difficult to take him for what he is really worth, and to realise that this silly, painted, prancing creature with the hysterical giggle and the childish manner is actually a dangerous brute at bottom, and that he would desire nothing better than to knock you on the head and eat you—only for that Nordenfeldt gun on the bridge and the rack of rifles in the pretty little gilded and brocaded saloon.

All that day we lay at anchor and endeavoured to win the confidence of the timid and retiring cannibal. The canoes came thick and fast round the ship by and by, and their occupants were delighted to receive the gifts handed down over the side—red calico, tobacco, common knives—all inestimable treasures to a village that knows no traffic with the white districts of Papua, and does not possess so much as an inch of hoop-iron for making adzes. With dusk our visitors cleared away, but at night we could hear loud singing on shore and see the light of fires in the village. They were evidently excited in the highest degree, and did not know what to make of our call.

Next morning, while sleeping peacefully in my

berth, I was awakened by a clinking noise, and looked up to see a long, brown, filthy arm and hand extended through the port, making a snatch at my water-bottle. I called out angrily, and the arm vanished with the water-bottle! Looking out through the nearer port I could see a flotilla of canoes round my cabin, and at least half a hundred unclean heathen hustling one another for a look in! I got up to slam the ports and screw them, but while I was fastening one the lean arm shot in again through the other, grabbed at the satin curtain, and all but secured it. I think the owner did pull a brass curtain hook off the rod before I snapped the port. It is a consolation to know that he just missed leaving a finger-tip as pledge.

Later, at breakfast, it became manifest that Goari-Bari had made up its mind to accept our visit as harmless. I should not like to say how many hundreds of savages were dodging each other in canoes under the ports of the saloon fighting for places to look in. Every porthole was a mosaic of ugly-painted faces and bobbing feathers. One middle-aged person of a cheerful and foolish countenance, whom we christened Willie (he learned his name almost at once, and answered to it like a dog), made himself especially prominent, and stared at the food with so much interest that I was moved to get up and offer him a tablespoonful of apricot jam. He seized the spoon promptly, and tried his best, amid shrieks of laughter from the saloon, to pull it out of my hand. Failing in this, he scooped the jam out,

looked at it, smelt it, rubbed it into his hair, and vanished.

By and by we went on deck and found the ship in possession of the heathen, who were scampering and squeaking all over the place, watched rather sullenly by our dozen of armed native constabulary, who thought it a hard thing indeed that they were not allowed to pick off even one of these outer barbarians. The white sailors kept a good look out on the visitors, for it was clear that these latter meant to make hay while the sun shone, and were bent on carrying off anything that was not nailed down. They tried for the brass stanchions of the gangway, they dragged at the canvas of the deck chairs, they pulled the belaying pins out of the rack, and were very loth indeed to put them back. Willie (among the foremost, as usual) attracted my attention by the extreme dirtiness of his person, and I brought out a tin basin of water and a piece of soap and began giving a demonstration in the art of washing one's hands.

Willie watched it rather nervously at first; it was clear that he suspected sorcery in the mysterious proceeding. I offered him the soap by and by, and made signs that he should rub it on his hands. I shall always honour Willie as the bravest of cannibals. Convinced as he evidently was that the thing was dangerous, the spirit of scientific investigation was stronger in his breast than mere personal fear. He washed his hands.



"WILLIE?"

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Then, like the countenance of

“The watcher of the skies,  
When some new planet swims into his ken,”

Willie's face expanded with the joy and awe of discovery. He looked at the soap. He looked at his hands almost with reverence, scarcely knowing them for his own. In an instant—nervousness and indecision swept away like snow before the sun—he had grabbed the basin, let it go after a brief tug-of-war, grabbed the soap, secured that, and . . .

Where was Willie? There was a canoe, paddling madly across the bay, faster and faster, further and further, almost out of sight. There was a man in it. It was Willie, and he had the soap.

I have not the slightest doubt that the town sat up all night after we had gone trying the new sensation with shrieks of joy. The missionary vocation is one that has never descended upon my unworthy person, but if I was not a missionary for that one afternoon, and a good one too, then let me never see soap again till I die.

The boats were ordered out not long after this, and we started for the town. In the first boat went His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor, several armed native constabulary, and an Australian colonel who was visiting the country. I was allowed to accompany the party in the second boat, which consisted of two or three more police, a couple of visiting missionaries, and an official.

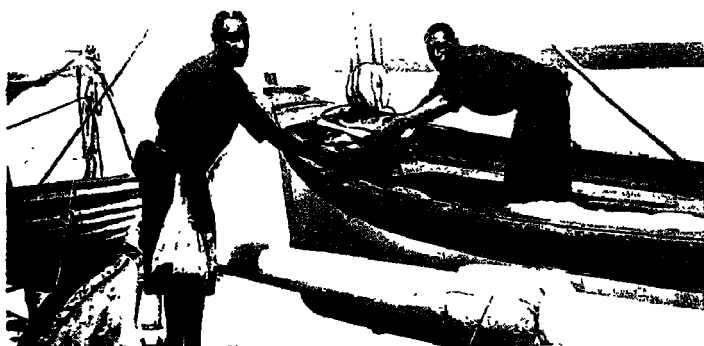


It was almost the first time anyone had made a peaceful visit to the town, with the exception of the disastrous call that ended in the death of Chalmers and Tompkins. The Goari-Barians are frankly at war with society. The position of their town in an inner curve of the stormy Gulf of Papua, on an island surrounded by shoals and shallows, has always protected them from sudden attack. Ships keep away religiously from the Gulf, which has a sinister reputation for wrecks and strandings; and the great clumsy "lakatois" of the Papuan native cannot approach the west at all during a good part of the year. Of willing visitors, therefore, Goari-Bari has had scarcely any, while of the unwilling visitors who must have been swept up to the town now and then by the strong currents of the Gulf, as Chalmers' luckless schooner was swept, none ever returned to tell the tale. Bits of brass fittings from ships which we saw while in the town suggested ugly stories that had never come to light. Heretofore the people of this infamous little place, when visited, had been either executioners or victims of their visitors. The peaceful call was new.

Evidently they did not know what to make of it. When our party landed on, or rather in, the black mud of the beach and walked up among the houses, with the native police straggling about in the rear and fervently praying for just that chance of a row that our leader had determined to avoid, the fighting men of the town seemed to go nearly out of their minds with excitement and indecision. They giggled and



WHERE CHALMERS WAS KILLED



THE BONES OF THE MURDERED MISSIONARIES

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grinned more than ever ; they hovered and danced about on tiptoe, nearly off the ground ; they ran after us, touched us, and withdrew as if we were red-hot. The wild nervousness of their demeanour was very much emphasised by the style of their dress, which consisted solely of ornaments, nearly all of a fluttering and trembling kind—waving plumes of long grass thrust into armlets, feathers ingeniously mounted on a stem that quivered with every movement, sweeping tails of grasses and fibres tied on at the back of the waist and swinging wildly as the wearer turned about, haloes of long shaking white and yellow parrot quills fastened round the head with tight bands. They really made one giddy to look at ; and it was better, in any case, not to look at them too much, for (as I have said above) the Goari-Barian has an extraordinary knack of vanishing in some incredible way under a house or into a thicket, if you look at him fixedly, which is, at the least, embarrassing. They carried bows and arrows and long spears of some wood like ebony, barbed and pointed at the end. Some of them wore close-fitting gaiters of bark cloth, extending from the ankle to the knee and neatly fastened with rows of small white cowry shells. They had no beads, save the native kind made from small shells, which are common among the uncivilised tribes. Cassowary feathers, which are like black horsehair in texture, seemed to be favourite adornments, worn either as sweeping plumes or as head ornaments shaped exactly like a miniature chimney-brush. Most

of the men, in addition to painting their faces and the shaven part of their heads bright red, had circled their eyes with a large black ring, which added considerably to the wild savagery of their appearance. The nose-bone was not worn.

The big dubu or communal house was of course the first place to visit in this odd sight-seeing tour. It stood close to the landing-place, on a bed of black swamp alive with small crawly crabs, and was approached by a very rough skeleton ladder some eight or nine feet high. The place had a special interest, for it stood on the spot occupied by the dubu in which Chalmers was murdered by these people in 1902. The Government had the dubu destroyed, but another was put up shortly after.

This was the first of the very long dubus that I had seen, and I looked at it with interest, knowing that I was seeing something which had never been described in print—which, indeed, was known to but a mere handful of the white race as yet. These long dubus are found only among the still unbroken and uncivilised cannibal tribes, and in most of the villages that possess them an unprotected stranger would be promptly massacred. We owed our safety to the fact that a dozen police armed with rifles accompanied us, and to the memory that the people still retained of the "massacre" of 1904. They might, of course, have rushed the party and overpowered it by superiority of numbers, there being some hundreds of men in the town; but our leader counted on the cowardice



III. 600-1111-LONG, DULU

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of the Goari-Barian—and rightly so, as events proved.

The dubu, as paced by some of the ship's party, was just upon 600 feet long. Its height was uniform all through, and seemed about twelve feet. Like an immense brown centipede it wound its way backwards through the swamp, supported on innumerable feet of upbearing piles, and covering an extent of ground that seemed practically endless. It took us quite a long time to walk down the dim brown tunnel of the interior, looking at everything as we went—the walls, of close-fitted stick-work ; the roof, nipa-palm thatch ; the curious little sections into which the whole place was divided, like the pens in a cattle-show, each pen being the abode of a more or less happy family, as proved by the domestic goods lying about—woven baskets, clay pots, belts, pieces of bark cloth. In the very centre of the building there was a sort of little bay looking out over the swamp and the creek. Here certain treasures, probably communal, were placed—two or three small wooden images of human beings, very rudely carved (we tried to buy them, but they seemed to be without price), several skulls, some carved into patterns of a rather Celtic character, some fitted with artificial snouts of bone fastened on with clay, which made them look extremely like the heads of beasts until closely examined.

And here “a strange thing happened.” Ever since we had landed in the town, strange, inhuman howls and wails had been resounding from the river that



ran back from the shore. We had not paid much attention to them, supposing them to be the excited cries of dogs. But here, from the point of vantage furnished by the bay, we could see a good way up the river, and it became clear that the howling was only in part attributable to the brute creation. The women of the town were fleeing up the river in canoes, uttering the most dismal of wails, in which they were joined by the dogs they were taking with them. Women, dogs, and skulls—in fact, all the treasures of the town—formed the cargo of every canoe.

We called to them, and even sent an interpreter to hail them from the bank, but they only paddled the faster, and were soon altogether lost to view.

This was hardly sociable of the Goari-Barians on an alleged friendly visit, the removal of the women being always a sign of distrust and hostility. However, our party abandoned the point for the moment, to return to it later, and continued the walk down the dubu. We emerged at the farther end into sunshine that seemed almost blinding and heat that struck upwards from the black mud of the swamp like the blast of a furnace. A few natives were hovering and twittering about beyond the dubu, running lightly up and down the slimy logs that served as pathways through the mud. We gave them some beads and some calico, both of which excited an almost religious emotion of delight. I do not think I shall ever forget the spectacle of a dozen sturdy cannibals sprawling on their hands and knees in the



AIRD RIVER NATIVIS (SHOWING THE 11 VILLAGES OF THE SWAMP COUNTRY)

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mud and reeds, trying to pick up about an ounce of small embroidery beads that someone had let fall into that hopeless tangle. There is little doubt that, if they took a week to it, they would manage to succeed.

While some of us were thus engaged, a canoe reappeared tentatively in the far distance, hovering about the corner of the river. Feminine curiosity, it seemed, was, after all, stronger than fear—an incident scarcely new in the history of the world. We seized the opportunity and, advancing to the bank, hailed the canoe. It vanished instantly, much to everyone's disappointment.

Then an inspiration seized me, and getting away from my party a hundred yards or so, I stood up on a log, called out loudly, and began waving some coloured ribbons. The canoes must have been within watching distance after all, for one crept cautiously out. Calling, signalling, and displaying the ribbons, I managed to lure the shy game to hand, and by and by we had two or three exceedingly ugly old women, wrinkled, bald-headed, and almost naked, standing trembling on the bank, eyeing the ribbons with covetous gaze. We gave the poor old souls a liberal portion of the treasure, and started back through the dubu to rejoin His Excellency, who was making a speech to the natives on the other side.

Of all the odd incidents of this odd, mad day, that which followed was the oddest and the nastiest. We—myself, the Government official, and a missionary—

stopped for a moment under the shade of the dubu verandah before going in ; and at this moment two or three men came out of the dubu carrying a lump of meat in their hands. It was ugly-looking meat, —watery, pale lead-coloured, fat ; it smelt abominably, and did not look like the known joint of any known animal. The men held it up before us as they passed, and one of them pulled off a morsel and thrust it under my nose. The stench made me nearly sick. I got out of range as quickly as possible, and took another look at the strange object from a safer distance. . . . Was it ? . . .

With a loud, savage laugh the men leaped down from the platform and rushed away into the bush, carrying their unsavoury morsel with them. I had my suspicions as to what it was, and my companions were quite certain. We had seen a bit of boiled man !

It was, of course, the flesh of a native victim. The people of Goari-Bari are very determined cannibals ; short of other food, they even eat the dead, provided the corpse is fairly young and well nourished. They are an ill-made, ugly-looking set of ruffians, and not at all healthy-looking, which is certainly what one would expect.

We found the Governor having a heart-to-heart talk with some of the worst-looking of the crew on the other side of the dubu. He spoke through an interpreter, and they listened with much seriousness, having apparently laid aside their nervousness for the

moment. They were not to go on eating each other, the Governor told them. It was disapproved by the Government; besides, they had to consider that if they went on eating their young people, by and by the village would die out. They were not to bury their corpses under houses or hang them up in trees (a picturesque local custom of which we had already had an illustration). They were, especially, not to kill any white men, but to receive them civilly if they came. The Government wished to be friends with them, and would protect them from their enemies if they behaved themselves.

The speech was received very gravely, and the distribution of calico and tobacco among the chief men of the town that followed seemed to cause much gratification. And now the proceedings were enlivened with a touch of humour.

"Here is some calico for yourself," said the distributor of the goods to an old man who appeared to be a person of some importance. "Here is another piece for your wife. Have you more than one?" holding a third piece in readiness.

"No!" cried the old man unexpectedly.

"Why not?" asked the dispenser of favours, rather surprised at such an admission from a chief.

"Because," yelled the old man, dancing with excitement and feeling, "one is enough—quite, quite enough!"

There were three married men in our party. When the old chief's remark was translated to them they all

roared. The unmarried men, on the other hand, scarcely seemed to think the joke remarkable for wit.

It was now after four o'clock, and we felt ready for afternoon tea. The native boat's crew, who were accustomed to this picknicking business, lit a fire, got out the hamper, and in a very short time had an impromptu table ready, covered with a damask cloth and shining with silver and china. We sat down on logs all round and began to enjoy our tea.

Words cannot depict the amazement, fear, and horror caused by the proceeding. It was of course taken at once for sorcery, and sorcery of the very worst kind. Astounding objects, such as no one had ever seen, put to incomprehensible uses by these scarcely comprehensible people—why, a man's life was not safe for a moment in the neighbourhood of such unholy mysteries! Nearly every soul cleared off into the bush like rabbits, leaving us in possession of an empty town—all but.

There were three or four, however, who still hung about, trembling with fear, but devoured with curiosity.

Watching cautiously from under the houses, they crept out by and by and ventured close up to the tea-table, their faces a very mask or representation of the emotion of astonishment. We offered them biscuits and cake, but not a soul would touch anything until he had seen the giver bite off and swallow a piece, when he usually took the remainder and ate it eagerly, yet cautiously. Any gentleman, they evidently thought,

might be moved at any time to poison another gentleman : it was the part of the other gentleman to see that he did not do it.

By now we thought it time to go back, so the boats were ordered, and the visitors took their departure. Goari-Bari had, for once, known a peaceful visit.

Next day the Governor went on shore, and after the exercise of a little diplomacy succeeded in getting possession of the bones of the murdered Chalmers and his fellow-worker Tompkins. They were easily identified by means of certain known peculiarities. The *Merrie England* conveyed them to the London Mission Station at Daru, where the representative of the Mission saw to their decent burial. And so the prestige of Goari-Bari was broken.

A year later the *Merrie England* made another call, when I had again the luck to be present. We found the town much as it had been on the occasion of the last visit—it could not be called more friendly. Still, judging by the experience that the Government has had with other intractable tribes, civility and trust will come in time. On this occasion the people of Goari-Bari visited the ship while the Government party was absent, and, in spite of the care of the sailors, stole one or two items that betrayed a strange taste in booty.

Item : His Excellency's toothbrush.

Item : Newspapers—all they could get.

Item : One pair of gloves, picked up in the water.



Item : One umbrella—theft vigorously attempted, but did not quite come off.

This was no mere chance selection. You can buy nearly anything in Goari-Bari for newspaper—politics indifferent—and as for an umbrella, the Goari-Barian would sell his soul, if he knew he had one, for even half of such a treasure. An aeroplane ascent in the midst of a Cockney crowd never created half so much excitement as did the unfurling of my umbrella in Goari-Bari on the day of our second visit. The people danced and shouted with excitement, and fought each other for a chance to touch the spring and repeat the miracle. Had I not been very strongly escorted they would certainly have had that umbrella; they could scarcely restrain themselves from snatching it as it was.

As for the toothbrush, I do not suppose for a minute that they meant to put it to its legitimate use, or had the slightest idea of what that was. They probably wanted it for a “pourri-pourri,” or charm—much as one of the Western tribes wanted a shoe-horn, which they stole from a trader and hung up in their biggest temple for the adoration of the faithful.

All in all, the tastes of Goari-Bari, coupled with its exceedingly primitive state, forcibly recall the saying of the famous philosopher who expressed his readiness to do without the necessities of life if he might only have the superfluities!

It was on the occasion of our second visit to the Wild West—in January, 1909—that we came upon

something that really was rather near being an adventure. The story is worth telling, not for any small part that I took in it myself, but simply as an illustration of something not known to most British colonies—the art of making peace peacefully.

This great unbroken and unexplored district of the West, with its smaller neighbour the Gulf Division, is perhaps the chief of the many sources of anxiety that render unquiet the pillow of Papuan rulers. All in all, this part of the country is as large as England, and nobody knows much about it. The peaceful planter of the Central and Eastern Divisions scarcely knows that it exists, and takes little interest in it, save in so far as it supplies him at times with wild, savage, but very useful labour. The tourist who comes up in the alleged cool season from Sydney or Melbourne for a trip round the Solomon Islands and Papua in a Burns Philp steamer never goes within a hundred miles of it—first, because steamers do not call; secondly, because everything that sails the seas goes in terror of the Gulf and its storms and currents and deadly river bars; thirdly, because it is not a place for the irresponsible tourist to “monkey with” anyhow, and he is usually advised to keep away. The *Merrie England*—a small, strongly built steamer made of wood, with a huge leaden keel, can take chances with reefs and bars that other vessels dare not encounter, and what she cannot do her steam-launch can. It is the duty of her officials to visit the district, and they do so; it is the duty of the Resident Magistrates to

patrol, and they try, under difficulties the like of which Stanley never even imagined; it is not the duty of anyone else to go there, and no one else goes except an occasional explorer.

The Government, therefore, is left to wrestle alone with the tremendous task of subduing, reforming, and bringing into line as a useful and civilised colony this immense preserve of murderous cannibals—an unknown land protected by dangerous coasts, by trackless marshes, by natural mazes of rivers hundreds of miles in extent, by vast unbroken forests, and, more than all, by a conformation of country almost inconceivably rugged and entangled.

The tools with which the Government has to work are almost laughably inadequate—two Resident Magistrates, thirty-four armed native constables, a couple of whaleboats, and two small ketches. The Government yacht makes not more than a couple of visits in the year, unless any serious disturbance calls for a special expedition.

One would like to see what kind of reception such a programme would meet with if put before one of our Indian, West African, or Burmese officials. "Utter impossibility" would be the mildest term likely to be used in describing it. And yet the impossible thing is being done in Papua, that land where, truly, "nothing arrives save the unexpected." The West is being broken in slowly, carefully, without violence, step by step, yet unmistakably. Two years ago the tribes of the delta country and the Aird

River openly defied and even attacked white men whenever they saw them. Now, like the sailor in the wise saw, if they have no decency they sham a little, and, at all events, receive the ruling race with civility—paying it the further compliment of concealing cannibal murders and outrages as far as possible from the prejudiced mind of the white. Goari-Bari may seem to be an exception, but the fact that a small party of whites, with a very small guard, now visit that notorious town in safety every year, proves an enormous advance over the state of a very few years ago. Further, the Western and Gulf tribes have recently begun to ask help from the Government when oppressed and attacked by their enemies, and one or two of them have, entirely of their own accord, sent in tribute of fruits and sago.

The old-fashioned system, now done away with, was the same that is being carried out in nearly all savage or semi-savage colonies to-day. It is very simple. You let your dangerous savage alone till he kills a missionary or a trader, and then you go and burn down his village and shoot as many of him as you can catch, which is not many as a rule. After this you return to your seat of government and let him alone. When the process has been repeated a good many times, you take a large armed force and march through his country fighting as you go in the hope of teaching him a lesson that he will not forget. He does not forget; on the contrary, he keeps a stone up his sleeve for you, and waits years, if need be, for

an opportunity to throw it—not necessarily at you ; if you are unattainable, the newest missionary or the latest settler or trader will do just as well. Then you go out and exterminate him some more, and if land has been taken up in his neighbourhood you “disperse” him (with a rifle) as often as he comes near the settlements. By this time he is getting discouraged, and (after the fashion of the discouraged native) he begins to die out, aided considerably by the gin to which the traders have introduced him. (You told them not to, but they would do it, and how were you to catch them? . . . besides, it really does add on to the revenue very conveniently, and gives you something to build your bridges with.) . . .

The process takes anything you like from fifty to a hundred years, but it comes to an end at last. The country is civilised. The native is dispersed—to the Elysian fields or elsewhere (not your fault, again ; you told him to go “to hell *or* to Connaught,” and if he chose the former, are you to blame?). You have imported nice, clean, sensible Indian and Chinese coolies to fill his place ; his hunting-grounds are covered with sugar plantations, and his mountain fastnesses are haunts of the winter tourist. In fine, you have civilised the country. And as for the “native” . . . did we say you were his keeper? Did anyone tell the first agent of civilisation on record—he who built the first cities, and was the ancestor of “those that work in brass and iron”—



TAKEN BY SURPRISE

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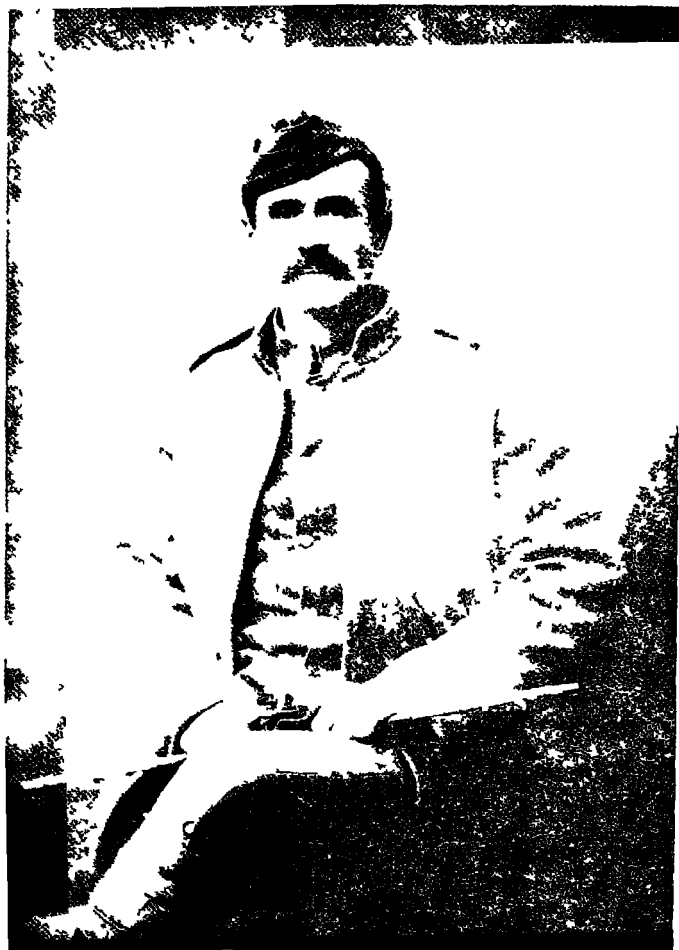


THE TUMPESTUOUS P I I NICO AT

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HIS EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE GOVERNOR OF PAPUA  
MAJOR J. H. P. MURRAY  
IN THE UNIFORM OF THE NEW SOUTH WALES POLICE SERVING IN  
SOUTH AFRICA

Front piece





*Photo W. Whitten.*

## A HOME IN PAPUA

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A PATENT OF NOBILITY

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that he was the keeper of the inconvenient personage he "dispersed"? . . .

That is the old way of our colonies. The new way is something so simple, yet so astonishing, that I count myself fortunate to have had the luck of seeing it in person. It is easy to understand an account of a punitive expedition or a fight. It is not so easy to see the inner meaning of a report that deals only with a peaceful call on a hostile tribe. I am glad that I was there to see and to realise how peace is being made in the West.

It was a wet, warm, blowy morning, and the Gulf looked very nasty indeed. The great inlet upon which the *Merrie England* had been pitching and rolling all night was livid yellow in colour under a sky of dirty grey. The little party of seven white people and eleven armed native police who were going ashore had to watch their time getting into the launch and the boat, and jump when the pitching seas allowed. Rain beat hard in our faces as the launch towed us at top speed to Goari-Bari, where we meant to get a guide if possible. We were going to a town called Maiparé, some few miles away, but no one knew exactly where it was, as it had never been visited by whites except in 1902, after Chalmers' death, when a general punitive expedition had landed a large body of soldiers from Australia, accompanied by native police, and shot everyone who appeared.



We did not expect a peaceful reception, and it was all the more important, therefore, to get a guide who could act as interpreter and call out encouraging remarks as we approached. (Of course the village had a language of its own. You might as well be without a detached villa in London Suburbia as without a detached language in the back country of Papua: the absence of either would argue an un-aristocratic familiarity with miscellaneous neighbours.)

They were not up when we got to Dopima Beach, below the town commonly called Goari-Bari. It was getting on for eight o'clock, but the morning was unpleasant and gloomy, and the simple savage (who is always up with the golden dawn, carolling like a lark as he seeks his breakfast of "herbs" and fruits, according to the simple-life theorists) had not turned out yet, and did not want to. We shouted for him till he did get up, however, and came down to the beach, two or three of him, looking sulky and sleepy.

With infinite persuasions and the promise of a good steel axe (produced) we succeeded in getting one man to go with us, after we had calmed his naïve fear that the Big Chief wanted to keep him altogether and his various coquetries about doing what was wanted of him. (*Il faut se faire mousser*, he seemed to be saying to himself in Goari-Barian.) It was well on in the morning when we got away, still under a fall of gusty rain, and made our way through the lumpy, pounding seas in the direction of Maiparé.

Our guide was quite happy for a while, and did not

seem much astonished by the mechanism of the steam-launch, although the ingenuities of my umbrella on the day before had nearly frightened him into a fit. Things entirely outside the grasp of the native mind do not astound it, as a rule ; it is small matters, such as gloves, tea-kettles, eye-glasses, that strike visible amazement into the soul of the simple cannibal. The speed of the launch seemed to delight him, and when he was told to get up into the bows of the boat and con us through the shoals, he obeyed with evident pleasure.

But now, after an hour or two, we were getting to Maiparé. The line of black swampy coast was closing in ; thatched houses could be seen in the distance, and small coloured specks were moving excitedly about. Our guide began to look as if he were asking himself the old riddle about what is better in a railway accident than presence of mind. He made a wild, weird picture enough, perched up against the sky-line in the bows like some demon figure-head, his body flung forward almost beyond the limits of statical laws, his black bark-cloth mantle flying in the wind, every feather in his halo streaming and quivering, his fierce, painted face strained towards the rapidly approaching shore. It was plain to everyone in the two boats that Maiparé did not want us, and was prepared to say "Not at home" in terms the most emphatic. The shore was lined with fighting men, several hundred of them, painted, feathered, and armed to the last degree. They were uttering a most

extraordinary cry, like nothing on earth but a dog-show in torment, loud yelps being mixed with piercing howls in a peculiarly canine way. As we came nearer they began to dance, and it was then that I first had the pleasure of seeing what very few people have ever looked on—a real war-dance, danced in earnest by genuine savages.

If anyone wants to see an exact reproduction of the performance, let him take a children's jumping-jack and pull the strings. That is the Aird River war-dance to a hair. Just so did the people throw up an arm and a leg, rapidly and alternately, with a curious, wooden, unlikelike effect, that yet managed to convey its meaning with remarkable clearness. "Come on!" it said. "Come on, and take what you will get!" The tall bows and the bunches of arrows, the long thin spears shaken defiantly in the air, the fluttering feathers and fringes of the dancing warriors, added to the general effect, and made one at least of the party curse the luck that had covered the sky with drifting rain-clouds and rendered the camera useless. I had secured a snap of a Goari-Barian rudely doing a war-dance by himself the day before; but the splendid picture of four or five hundred men in full war-dress dancing with all their souls was not to be mine or anyone else's.

The steam-launch puffed on, and we rushed nearer and nearer to the shore. Our interpreter and guide swung wildly by a stay in the bows, yelling himself hoarse, calling to the people to put down their arms,

assuring them no harm was meant, urging them to stop dancing, to listen ; but they took no more notice of him than if he had been a screaming cockatoo. We were almost within bowshot now ; and some of us were beginning to wonder what was coming next—only to wonder, however. We had seen something of the Governmental methods before, and knew that they had a knack of turning out right side up.

When close to the shore the Governor stopped the launch and started for the shore with nine of the police and four of the white men, leaving myself, two police, and two engineers in the steam-launch, all very bitterly disappointed at being out of the fun, though I was told I should be sent for as soon as possible. We were immediately surrounded by a swarm of canoes filled with lively gentry from the town, who hovered about us, darting to and fro, and trying to grab everything portable that the launch contained. It took up all our attention for a few minutes to protect the *Merrie England's* property without creating a disturbance, and so I missed the sight of the landing, which must have been worth seeing. The howls of the interpreter had succeeded so far as to induce the natives to lay down some of their weapons and to stop dancing. On this the party landed, and the five white men and nine police then went for a walk among the four or five hundred excited cannibals, talking to them, looking at them, and offering them smokes. This unprecedented conduct first puzzled, then interested, then reassured the

warriors. They could not understand very well what these lunatics were doing, but they thought the strangers must be in possession of some extraordinary unseen force to behave in such a manner, and they inferred that their intentions were nevertheless not evil. They did not abandon their arms, and they kept up an extremely wild and excited demeanour, but they made no attack, and when asked to bring out their women, so that the white woman might come ashore, they actually produced two or three wrinkled old hags and brought them down to the beach.

The boat was now sent for me, and brought me into the town. I had scarcely set foot on the mud of the beach when the two old women seized me by both hands and grasped me as if they were drowning. They were evidently very badly frightened, and clung to the idea of a hostage as their only safety. Surrounded by a wildly excited crowd—the hysteria of Goari-Bari was really nothing to the hysteria of Maiparé—they, and an old man who seemed to be a chief, led me to the dubu of the town, and half dragged, half pushed me up the ladder. Some of our own party followed, but the old hags were evidently not interested in them. They towed me down the whole length of the dubu (nearly as long as that of Goari-Bari), still led by the old chief, and still cackling and chuckling with joy. At the end of the building they paused, and seemed undecided what to do. The far door led out into the depths of unknown, slimy, swampy thickets, and I had no fancy at all to go there, as

their looks suggested they wanted me to do. Possibly the rest of the women were concealed somewhere in the swamp and wished to see me, but I thought the chance too uncertain to take, as treachery is the very soul of the western savage. We all lingered for a moment, apparently admiring the very unadmirable view, and then, on the motion of the whites, started back down the endless length of the dim, dusty, shaky brown tunnel along which we had come.

The women still kept up their drowning grip, and the old man still towed the entire outfit. When we reached the centre of the dubu they came to a determined halt and began pulling downwards towards the floor, motioning to myself and the two white men who were with me that we should sit.

Nobody knew exactly what to do. There were a good many natives in the dubu, and although the people were civil enough, one could not quite forget that the preliminary to the end of Chalmers and others had been just such an invitation to "sit down." There was silence for a moment or two. The sun sifted in through the roof in long thin spears, making a warp of dusty gold across the transparent gloom. The curtains of brown combed fibre that hung from the rafters dropped straight and still in the windless air, like worn-out banners from some forgotten battlefield, hung in a dark cathedral. Dusky faces and forms, scarce visible in the shadow, and motionless save for the trembling of a grass armlet or the flicker

of a plume, waited for our reply. And the women pulled my hands.

It was only a few seconds before the white men answered. We would not stay, they said. It was getting late, and we had to remember the fall of the tide.

So we went out again into the rainy sunlight of the beach, where the mud-crabs crawled by millions in the slime, and the poisonous green bush clustered low on the black quagmire of the land. Maiparé was still at fever-point of excitement, running about, staring, skipping, bolting into the bush and coming back again, and (like Goari-Bari) instantly converting itself into a dissolving view if you looked at any of it too closely. But it had altered its demeanour to a certain extent. The presents given by the Government party—wonderful red calico, beads, knives, tobacco—had convinced it that these strange people, headed by the very tall chief, did not intend to use the mysterious powers of offence that they no doubt possessed. It had brought out more of its women—*young ones this time*—and a few children, to share in the good things that were going ; and it was laughing now—laughing with a wild nervous excitement, but evidently not without some sort of pleasure. When we re-embarked, at least a score of long light canoes pushed off from shore to accompany us as far as possible. The men paddled with astonishing vigour, and kept up with the launch as long as the smooth water lasted, but when we got out into the lumpy

water of the bay the cockle-shell crafts fell behind, and the last we saw of Maiparé was a vision of wild painted faces, with feathers streaming in the wind, and long mantles of new scarlet calico slatting and flying like loose sails, all falling into the rear, with shrieks and cries that needed no interpreter to translate them into their obvious equivalent—"Come again!"

One knew, without being told, that the next party of official visitors who came to Maiparé would find the town friendly and well-disposed. Another step had been taken towards the pacification of the West.

There is not space to tell of two or three other calls that the Government party made while I was with them in the same district; calls that took us into villages never before seen by whites, where sometimes nearly the whole population cleared off into the bush, only a few brave or curious souls remaining to see what manner of people these white conquerors might be, of whom they had heard so much. The plucky minority were always well rewarded, for gifts of red calico, beads, tobacco, and knives were always made, and all these are valued in the Gulf and river country much as Russian sable robes, diamonds, and fine solid silver tableware would be valued in an English provincial town if suddenly distributed broadcast by an eccentric travelling millionaire.

None of the odd experiences for which people spend their time and money in travelling is more piquant than this playing of Lords and Ladies Bountiful among untamed savages. It is as gratifying to one's



natural human vanity as the part of a great Royalty might be to one unaccustomed to such honours. When your boots are obviously regarded as a miracle, your hat as a piece of magic—when a stray button from your clothes is cherished like the relic of a saint, and the back of an old letter out of your pocket is accepted with trembling joy—when your lordly munificence in giving away halfpenny sticks of tobacco, and your splendid generosity in bestowing inestimable fourpenny knives seem to drive the lucky beneficiaries half out of their minds, it is hard not to feel that you are great and good to a degree that even you yourself had not previously suspected. Of course, real gratitude is an emotion not known to these simple souls, any more than it is known, as a rule, to your greengrocer, or your county member, or your patient, or your client, or your tiresome greedy nephew or aunt. They (the savages) think you silly for giving them all these treasures, but they worship the power that has made you master of such things, and they understand dimly, imperfectly, yet unmistakably, as men black, brown, and white, cannibal or Christian, do understand the things that really matter—that you mean to be their friend.

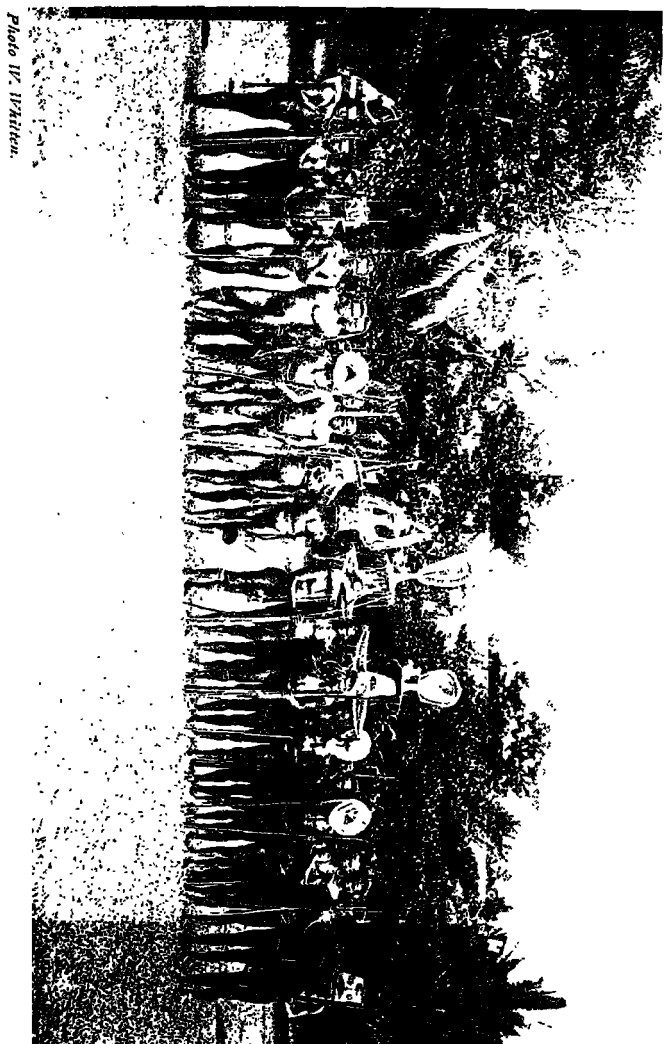
With this knowledge goes also the conviction—much older, and based on manifold rumours that have drifted in from the wider civilisation beyond—that the Government does not like cannibalism and tribal murder, and that these pleasing diversions are best kept away from its knowledge “lest some worse

thing happen." Later on will come the step which Maipua has taken during the year and a half that have elapsed since I first made its acquaintance—actually abandoning these practices, and fast becoming the copy-book example of the river country. The cannibal of the West is by no means deficient in brains, and when he realises once for all that it pays to be "in" with the Government, he becomes almost obtrusively loyal.

In a new village the Government always cements the allegiance of the chiefs by a curious ceremony, which might be called the Investiture of the Order of the Imperial Shirt. Clothes-wearing, it may be added in parenthesis, is not encouraged among the natives, as science has proved that it helps to produce disease, but an exception is made in the case of chiefs with whom the ruling Powers wish to open up friendly relations. Anything like a ceremonial dress or uniform has an incalculable effect upon the Papuan mind. The force of village constables that helps the Armed Native Constabulary in keeping order would, like the constabulary, be more comfortable, and perhaps more healthy (though no ill results have been noted) without the serge tunics and jumpers, braided with red, that they wear as a sign of office ; but it is certain that they would be much less happy, and that they would exact scarcely any respect from the other natives without uniform. In the unsettled and scarce-visited districts of the West, where a rude kind of bark cloth is the only material available for covering,

the smallest fragment of cotton is highly valued, and the possession of a whole shirt is enough to make a man a king among his fellows. Therefore, at each new town, where the foot of the white man had never before attempted to tread (we say attempted, as the treading was mostly done on half-submerged logs with occasional disasters), the principal old man was picked out and solemnly invested by the Governor's Private Secretary with a shirt, a cotton tunic, and a leather belt.

One and all they took the ceremony in exactly the same way. It was possible to be excited and hilarious over a knife or a handful of beads, but for great matters great emotions were appropriate. They understood fully that the presentation of these royal robes conferred a rank upon them higher than they had ever possessed, and made them in some way allies of the mysterious power known as "Gova-mena." With a dignity surprising to see in a naked heathen who had only the moment before been prancing and skipping with excitement, and scrambling in the mud for beads, the chief, under operation, would stand up to be dressed, head in air, chest thrown out, eyes half closed with pride, and utter never a word while he was being put into the strange garments that were to change the whole current of his life. Once shirted, tunicked, and belted, he would march down the dubu with long slow strides, collecting and enjoying the popular homage as he went, but never casting a glance at the common folk who offered it. Hence-



*Photo W. Whitten.*

DANCING MASKS: GULF OF PAPUA

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forth he was somebody, and very likely, indeed, to be on the side of the mysterious power that had promoted him, if it happened to come down looking for a murderer some months later, or to want men for carriers, or to require any other little service.

Kaimari, a neighbour of the copy-book Maipua, has progressed so far as to become actually embarrassing by excess of zeal. It even sent out seven hundred warriors in war canoes to meet and join the Government party, on one occasion in 1908, when the Government wished to investigate an attempted attack on two venturesome white traders, which had occurred at another delta town—Ukiaravi. The very last thing the party desired, naturally, was an army of bloodthirsty, howling fiends to accompany them on a mission that was delicate and diplomatic in the extreme, but they had almost insurmountable difficulty in inducing the loyal militia of Kaimari to go home. Ukiaravi—a town of some thousands of people, determinedly hostile to whites—was on that occasion taken possession of by the usual four or five white men and handful of police, and a number of prisoners carried away handcuffed, and in mortal terror, to several years of jail in Port Moresby. It was done by a determined show of force, a little quick action, and no violence at all; the people of Ukiaravi, as the result of this salutary action, have been sending tributary canoes of sago and fruit, whenever they could, ever since, to express the extreme

and enthusiastic character of the loyalty they have so suddenly acquired.

After I had left the West and gone back to Port Moresby in the *Merrie England*, the Government party—His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor, five other white men, and eleven police—left the yacht altogether for more than a week, going inland in boats to districts of the Aird River country never seen by whites, and discovering a number of new, largely populated towns. This voyage of adventure added a good deal to the imperfect geographical knowledge of the district, and did much to bring the country in touch with civilised influences. No attacks were made and no trouble met with. The peaceful display of authority thus shown, and the knowledge that the tiny handful of whites had no fear whatever of the hordes of murderous cannibals among whom they were journeying, far from all possible help, no doubt laid the foundations of a future reign of law and order among the hitherto intractable savages.

This is the new way. Those who know the country are beginning to hope that it may have a new result—the preservation of the native races, an end hitherto not achieved in any similar possession of Great Britain.

## CHAPTER VII

Eastward in the *Merrie England*—The prettiness of Samarai—"Very feverish"—Hunting the Japs—The island world again—What they did in Milne Bay—A day in the gold mines—The man who lost his head—The unbelievable island—Did they eat the Chinamen?—A two days' man-hunt—Where the money is made.

**I**T is half-past five o'clock.

The stars seem to be cooling down before they go out. All night they have danced and swayed in the space between the bulwark and the awning, hot, yellow, and restless. They are turning pale now, and their white faces look chill. The warm river of wind that has been flowing steadily down from the bowsprit across my mattress since eleven o'clock now takes on a touch of grateful coolness. The east is growing orange—the lurid, volcanic orange of a tropic dawn.

I sit up on my mattress, dressing-gown clad, and look round. On the bridge-deck above, the sheeted dead seem to be lying in heaps, limbs cast abroad, heads thrown back to the lightening sky. It is only the Government officials and the ship's officers wrapped in the quilts that they have pulled up as the chill of the dawn began, but it certainly suggests a battlefield in the dead stillness of this early hour while the *Merrie England* is yet asleep. She will not long be



asleep, however. It is close on deck-washing time, so I gather up my pillows and go down reluctantly to my pretty, roomy, dainty, but most outrageously hot and stifling cabin on the deck below. The temperature is over 100, for the ports have to be kept shut owing to the liveliness of the yacht out at sea; and we are in the worst of the hot season, thrashing round the south-east corner of New Guinea on a tour about the islands.

We left Samarai yesterday—the second town in Papua; the “other” town, in fact, since there are but two. Samarai is surely one of the very prettiest places in the whole tropic world. Its situation is unique—a tiny island, which you can walk round in a quarter of an hour, set in the midst of a bright blue strait surrounded by high, steep, densely wooded hills. There are other islands dotted about the strait, some large, some small, some near, some far away, but all alike bright green, palmy, fringed with snow-white coral beaches—in fact, the typical South Sea island of a schoolboy’s dream. People live on one or two—a man and his wife, looking after their coconut plantation; a solitary German, who keeps cattle and sends milk over to Samarai every day in a boat; a Chinaman, who grows cabbages and beans to supply the hotels. Native canoes, made out of hollowed-out logs and gaily decorated with big white shells, ply constantly up and down among the straits and islets. The tribes who live on the mainland are all friendly and on good terms with the whites. Looking down



SUMARAI ISLAND

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through the narrow neck of China Straits (if you ask me why "China" I cannot tell you ; no one seems to know) on a clear day, one can see the dark blue mass of Ferguson Island, which is much bigger than the Isle of Wight, standing up on the horizon some forty miles away. They are naughty little people on Ferguson—ill-tempered small cannibals who hide in mountain fastnesses and throw spears at the Government officials when the latter go out on patrol. But they keep to themselves, and are never seen near Samarai.

As for Samarai itself, it is a much more imposing town than the capital. It has several large wooden hotels, three miscellaneous stores, and a whole street of little tin-roofed offices and bungalows. It is neat and tidy to the verge of primness—white sanded walks, bordered by gorgeous hedges of crimson and orange-leaved crotons ; shaven green lawns ; garden seats set out at picturesque points all round the island. Roses red, white, and yellow ; scarlet and cream-coloured hibiscus, jasmine in hedges, climbing allamanda (a flower like a large yellow gloxinia), strange blossoms that fall like showers of tiny blood-drops through feathery green foliage, pink begonias, and all sorts of quaint-foliaged trees, from the huge forest king that bears thousands of sweet nuts, and is generally half scarlet, half green in leaf, down to the weird, stiff, witch-like pandanus with the twisted chevaux-de-frise of saw-edged swords—all these brighten up the park-like, dainty little place and add still further to its cultivated look.

There is, in truth, not much cultivation about it after all—a few prisoners from the jail kept cleaning and weeding; no more. In countries like Papua, nature simply leaps to meet the gardener's hand. The mainland is just as fertile as Samarai. When you take up land you can clear away your "bush" or forest, leaving the ornamental trees and plants, of which there are many; pull branches off anything that you fancy in a neighbour's place, and stick them in anywhere you like; give one or two flowering creepers *carie blanche* to behave as they please; bring a little white sand from the beach or a few stones and ferns from the river—and in a few weeks' time behold a result that would make Kew Gardens sick with envy! Orchids you can find anywhere, and they will grow on any tree to which you tie them. Butterflies as big as birds and as bright as jewels, white and coloured parrots, fireflies, many-coloured dragon-flies, will come without being asked. Palm trees—the scaly-trunked sago palm; the stately cocoanut, queen of the tropic world; the brilliant green "fan" palm; the incredible betel palm, with its white trunk no larger than your neck, and seventy or eighty feet high—you will find established on your ground when you arrive. . . . How much do you think it used to cost to raise those half-dozen gloomy little palms in the steaming hot-house at the castle? How many gardeners did that stretch of "carpet bedding" at the deanery employ? . . . You are a little trader and you do a little planting, and your boots wear out



THE SHORES OF SAMARU

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before you can afford to increase your bill at the store by fifteen shillings for a new pair, and you have to make your dining-room table yourself out of old packing-cases ; but nobody under ten thousand a year could match those grounds of yours at home.

. . . . .

I have wandered some way from the *Merrie England* and her tour. Breakfast is over now ; the ship has been behaving very badly, progressing for the most part "the way the divil wint through Athlone—in shtandin' leps," with an occasional right and left roll that shakes the passengers exactly as a gigantic terrier might shake a rat. In consequence people are feeling "very feverish to-day," and appetites are uncertain. . . . Fever in Papua covers more sins, secrets, and weaknesses than ever did the proverbial cloak of charity. Is there a vicious roll on the steamer, and does your face grow green as the swinging seas ? You are feverish ; you must go and lie down. Have you been dining unwisely last night, and do you find your hand unsteady and your eyes watery and your head racked with pain next morning ? Fever—you know you've got a temperature, and you won't have any breakfast, thanks—only soda-water—which everyone knows is good for malarial troubles. Has your pretty *fiancée* written up from Melbourne to say that she is tired of waiting for you, and that Mr. Solomonstein's attentions (Solomonstein, Aarons, Levi, and Co. own half of Swanston Street) have met with so



much approval from her family that—that, in fact, she returns your ring and hopes you will find someone more worthy of you? . . . Fever—that is what makes you look so dark under the eyes and so sallow about the cheeks and keeps you awake at nights for a week or two to come . . . at least, you can say it is, and you will be believed, for most people take a little fever now and then as all in the day's work, and are almost inclined to resent the impudence of the lucky minority who never have any. Yes, there is something to be said for even the malarial nuisance.

By and by we run under the lee of the first of the Louisiade group, and the fever patients get better with astonishing quickness.

The Government yacht does not trouble much about the Louisiades as a rule, since the natives are fairly civilised and give no trouble; but we are on a special mission this trip. One versatile vessel is appearing in an entirely new character—that of a man-of-war. We are out chasing certain Japanese luggers which have been awaking suspicion by their movements, and if we catch them we are going to give them “what for”—that is, we shall confiscate them, put our chief officer on one and our boatswain on another, and tow the prizes triumphantly into Samarai.

What have they been doing? Well, they have been taking Papuans, without leave or license, off to the pearling grounds at Thursday Island; furthermore, they have walked clean through customs and

quarantine regulations wherever they have been, and recklessly profaned the sanctities of "pratique"—an offence that only the ocean-going traveller can appreciate at its full value. Short shrift they will get if we catch them, armed with the full authority of our racks of rifles and our Nordenfeldt gun. But shall we catch them? A pearling lugger draws little more water than a whale-boat; we scrape the bottom at fourteen feet. What we know about the reefs, shoals, and "vigias" on this semi-charted coast is no small thing—more than the "B.P.'s" know—much more than the Admiralty surveys know—but not so much by a good way as the wily little Jap knows. That sort of thing is his speciality. He possesses charts of the Great Barrier Reef of Australia that make legitimate Government surveys look foolish. He knows more than he has any business to know about Australian harbours. He could tell the Commonwealth much that they would like to hear about the Northern Territory and the Gulf of Carpentaria. And if we could get hold of all the information he possesses about the dangerous, half-charted, all unlighted and unbeaconed coasts of Papua, a great deal of work would be saved the Survey Department of that colony.

What does he want with it? Well, you must not ask me, because you do not really want to hear—you nice people at home. He is your ally, and your ally can do no wrong; and the colour line is a nothing—a chimera—"an idee in folks' heads," as the prosaic

lady of Maine defined the science of psychology. Only those people who have really met and lived among yellow and chocolate and red and black fellow-creatures think that colour means anything—and somehow they are always prejudiced. In the days when I lived among white people, and white people only, myself, I used to think that residence in the tropics destroyed anyone's power of unprejudiced thought on these questions of colour. Now I am prejudiced myself; I will not talk to you at all, because I know what you feel; but I think—yes, I think very hard and very loud indeed!

. . . . .

We did not catch those Japs—those dear little, intelligent, gentle, open, straightforward Japs, who had doubtless such excellent views on art, and spoke so courteously to each other about “honourable tea.” We never even caught a glimpse of their sails in the distance; nor did anyone else, then or later. I inclined at the time to think that they had been met and warned by a third lugger which had put into Samarai a few days earlier, and had been unkindly fined £15 for sending its crew ashore wooding and watering without the formality of passing the doctor. . . . When the Resident Magistrate reproved the captain for this lawless deed the captain was very innocent, very sorry, very shy. He had not understood, that was all. He did not know ships had to have papers, had to satisfy customs and quarantine

officers ; he had never heard of *pratique*. *Pratique* ?  
. . . What was that word ?

"You say you're from Thursday Island ?" queried the R.M. "How long were you there ?"

"Fi-ive ye-ear," drawled the gentle little captain.

I wish I could reproduce the snort that expressed the R.M.'s opinion of the yellow races in general, and the captain in particular.

The lugger went out, warned and fined, and the two other luggers—the really naughty ones—vanished from Papua almost immediately after. So we did not catch them—much to my regret ; it seemed to me that it would have been the next best thing to living in one of Marryat's novels.

However, our investigations took us into several places quite off the ordinary track. Teste Island was one of these. It is a small bit of country, two and a half miles by a quarter of a mile, but very pretty in the South Sea style—cloud-white coral beach, rustling, swaying palms, green lagoon, and light, bright, flowery soil. Coral soil does not as a rule grow heavy bush, and these islands in consequence are full of clear sunlight and gay colouring, with scarce a shadow where you can escape from the midday glare.

The orange groves were the only shady spot on Teste Island ; we coveted the golden fruit as we stood beneath the boughs, but alas ! the Hesperidean dragon, in the person of official Methodism, barred the way. The day was Sunday ; it was wicked to

pick fruit on Sunday, more wicked to sell it—the Teste Islanders would none of us.

Still, the island is interesting to spend a morning in. We walked over the little village, and saw its quaint houses, all set up, Papuan fashion, on long wooden legs, all with transparent floors of split sticks, cool, heavy roofs of sago thatch, and perpendicular ladders leading up to the doors. Inside, there were piles of fishing-nets, beautifully spun and netted out of bush fibres, a few baskets of native make, a number of netting needles prettily carved, some large clay pots, and in the middle of everything, carelessly set down inside the slightest of wooden fences, the inevitable native fire. How it is that every village in Papua is not burned down, wholly or partially, every day in the year, is a problem that an insurance company's secretary might find difficulty to solve. Fires are always kept burning in the houses—it would be hard to say what for, in a country where cooking is only done once a day, and the temperature is like the stokehole of an Indian liner. These fires are set on a bed of white ashes, which in its turn apparently lies right on the fragile stick floor, and is surrounded with inflammable things of every kind—leaf baskets, grass skirts, wooden sleeping pillows, etc.—the whole being roofed over by thatch, and surrounded by walls that are crackling with inflammable dryness. A single spark ought to set a whole village afire, and yet, somehow, it never does, not even when the whole population goes out fishing



*Photo W. Whitten.*

A HAPPY AFTERNOON

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and leaves all the fires untended, and all the doors open. If this is not a miracle, one would like to know what it is. It is not so surprising after all, however, for in this impossible country ordinary laws of nature seem the last things that can be counted upon to act in an ordinary way.

The people of Teste Island wear a good deal of clothing, in some cases, though in others the narrow native girdle is considered enough. The women are liberally tattooed, often with considerable art. They were curious about our ship, and interested in the call, but obviously not unfamiliar with the ways of white people. Indeed, there are two white men who spend most of their time on the island, or in its vicinity—Greeks from Southern Europe, speaking no English except a very little of the "pigeon" variety. They trade with the natives for copra. Greeks were among the very earliest of visitors to the island, many years before Papuan colonisation had begun. Perhaps one of the oddest incidents of the voyage was the little scene that took place under the palms of the village, our chief officer, who was half Greek by descent, conversing in fluent phrases with the two queer white wanderers, and importing a bewildering atmosphere of scholarship and ancient colleges and stately resounding sentences learned in the cool leisure of the old country, long ago, when there was time for everything, into this remote tropic island, so far away from "anywhere." No news was derived from this "meeting of Greeks," however. Our



quarry had not been seen ; and we went back to the ship unsatisfied.

Next day we reached another coral island, set in another beautiful lagoon—Nivani, about the same size as Teste Island. It was a Government station, with a resident magistrate, until a few years ago. But it is now deserted, and the Government buildings and jail are falling into ruin. There are a few natives on the island cultivating the copra, which is leased to a resident in Sud-Est. Exquisitely pretty, like all the Louisiade group, is this little island, lying in the midst of a brilliant green lagoon, encircled with a snowy white beach, and decked with waving palms and feathery casuarina, one of the loveliest of tropic trees. There are many gay red and yellow crotons in the bush, scarlet-flowered hibiscus, too, and white and yellow flowers of several kinds. Pawpaw grows freely, also edible nuts. The climate appears to be good, and free from the damp heat of the mainland. This is an example of a good many similar islands clustering about the outer end of New Guinea, which seem to offer possibilities to the would-be copra planter. They are the best possible places for the cocoanut, which loves the near neighbourhood of the sea, and many of them are already extensively planted, naturally or artificially. A man who wished to settle down on his own plantation might do worse than look up the available islands about the New Guinea coast. Health is always better on the small islands than on the mainland, and there are pleasant places to live

in, not to mention the convenience of transport of produce, as compared with inland districts.

Two more islands next day of the same kind, beautiful, peaceful, remote, full of the sound of the sea and the low murmur of palms, and thinly inhabited by peaceful and harmless natives. Moturina and Pana Pom-Pom it was this time. We went ashore and made the usual grand tour, returning to the ship with a feeling of vague dissatisfaction at the requirements of official, literary, and business life, that forbade us one and all to buy islands and settle down upon them, and cease from troubling about Parliaments, or mails, or dates, or times, or seasons, any more for ever.

I, who had known the true island world well and long, and seen many who realised the curiously universal dream of taking an island to live in, as in a kingdom of their own, saw many memories flit across the empty sky, in the long pull back to the ship. . . . How often in far-away Tahiti, or Samoa, or in little-known isolated groups, I had seen that dream realised—the trader or planter settled down in his own little country, perhaps a few acres, perhaps many square miles in extent, with his wife and family, and his small following of native labour, for all society, and his cutter the only means of communication with the outside world. . . . Were they happy, these new Swiss Family Robinsons, in that life that so many envy them? Yes—and no. I have heard a Fiji planter, who had tried the life for some years, declare that no man would keep it up, except out of interest,

after the first five seasons, and that those who were obliged to hang on were heartily sick of it. I have known a man and his wife, used to a complex and cultured society, perfectly happy for more than twice five years in an island isolated from all but the rarest calls. I have known a good many who dropped down to the level of the surrounding natives—usually through that curse of island life, a native marriage—and some who kept well above it, yet became nevertheless partially unfitted for white society. On the whole, one is compelled to allow that the ideal life on an island of one's own does not appear to have ideal effects when translated out of the visionary into the concrete. It is best suited to the very old or the very young—those who have done with life, and only desire to rest and dream until the end, or those who are still so rich in the unspent capital of golden years that they can afford to throw away a few on the chance that the life may really prove to be all that they desire.

We returned to Samarai after a cruise of several days, disappointed as regarded the Japs, but well pleased with what we had seen. I cannot say exactly what lands are to let, and what are still free among these island groups, but it may be generally stated that there is a good deal to be had, practically without rent (though with conditions as to improvement), and that the land is in most cases excellent for copra. The natives of the Louisiade group are among the most civilised in New Guinea, and have in most cases been Christianised (more or less) for many years.



*Photo H. W. Hitten.*

THE PALMY SHORES OF PAPUA

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The Government nursery at Milne Bay, half a day's run down the coast, had to be visited after this. Milne Bay is a very peaceful place in these days; you could take your aged grandaunt, or your timid sister-in-law who has never been out of her own country, and leave her there for six months, with a comfortable certainty of finding her all in one piece, if somewhat bored, when you returned. It was not always so, however. Less than twenty years ago the Milne Bay tribes used to eat any stranger who landed there; and it took much "faithful dealing" on the part of the Government, backed up by the Armed Native Constabulary, to improve their company manners. Milne Bay was one of the districts where the gentle Papuan used to roast his game alive—pig when there was nothing better, man when he was to be had. Roasting pigs alive is an amusement by no means extinct in the Territory even yet. The Papuan is fully alive to the value of self-advertisement, and by simply omitting the preliminary knock on the head, he has it in his power to let every native for two miles around know most unmistakably that there is going to be roast pork for dinner at a certain village by and by—which is naturally gratifying to the village, if not to the pork. Roasting men after the same fashion has been so sternly discountenanced by the Government that the practice is supposed to be extinct; although it would be hard to say what may or may not go on in the unexplored inner country of the main ranges.

To Milne Bay, some time in the early nineties,

came a ship with certain sailors, and they went ashore for wood and water. One of them was missing on the return to the boats, and the others set out to look for him. They did not find him, and retreated disconsolate. On the next day they hunted again ; still no trace of the missing comrade, but the sailors—rough men though they were—were sickened and disgusted by the awful cries of a pig which was evidently being roasted alive in the neighbourhood. Their numbers were small, and they thought it wiser not to incense the natives by interference, so they went back to the ship and next day hunted again with despairing hearts. . . . They came upon the village of the feast unexpectedly, but they found no remains of the pig. There had not been any pig. There had been a man—a white man—a man whose voice they had mistaken for the voice of a brute—their comrade.

Well, Milne Bay is improved since then. We went ashore and walked to the Government station, and I got separated from the rest of the party as usual, looking for illusory iguanas and mythical orchids, and found them (the party) again, as usual, without causing anxiety or feeling it. And we spent a pleasant hour or two there looking at things nobody understood, and came back to the *Merrie England* quite happily and safely, nothing having been cooked but tea, and nothing eaten but ship biscuit.

The Government nursery—one of four—was very like the specimen I had already seen on the Laloki

River. No "frills" of any kind—a bungalow of native materials for the curator ; a few long sheds with brushwood roofs, sheltering rows and rows of neatly labelled plants in boxes, beds, and pots ; rough walks outside, leading to little plots of industrial plants, kept ready for sale. A useful, cheap, sensible sort of place not meant to show to visitors. A place where you can go and buy your rubber seeds or stumps, your hemp plants, your cocoanuts, your coffee, cotton, spice, or drug seeds cheap and fresh, and take them down to your plantation in good condition.

"Ninety-day" maize was growing here among many other plants that illustrated the richness of the soil. Four crops a year you can grow of this maize in suitable districts. It would be an exacting planter who would ask more.

There seems to be no good reason why the Papuan planter should not grow the food for his own labour, and avoid the heavy expense of purchasing imported rice. At present rice is the chief food on all plantations ; but the small experiments that have been made with maize seem to prove that the natives would rather have it, and that they work better on this tasty and nourishing grain than on the ordinary rice ration. Why does no one grow it on a large scale ? Apparently because all the plantations are new, and all the planters are in a terrible hurry, and it is easier to order a couple of hundred mats of rice from the stores at seven shillings a mat than to sow maize, and



wait three or four months for it. . . . Another of the "reasons why" that explain the unprofitableness of certain profitable and promising-looking estates.

Another quick-change for the *Merrie England* followed our agricultural trip. This time we were out on salvage work. One of the Government schooners had been wrecked on a reef at the back of nowhere-in-particular, and we had to get her off, or at least to see how it could be done.

It was near East Cape, not far from the D'Entrecasteaux Islands, that the schooner had come to grief. The D'Entrecasteaux, like the Louisiades, would be regarded as a group of considerable importance if they were situated anywhere else than off the end of this great island-continent. Normandy is seven or eight times as big as Malta. Ferguson would make nearly four of the Isle of Man, and there are others in the group by no means negligible in size. But Papua does not trouble very much about them, nor about the Bouvonloirs, the Lusançays, the Laughlins, and other miscellaneous groups scattered here and there. The Trobriands and the Woodlarks, on the contrary, are much thought of; one has pearls and the other gold, and that is something worth talking about.

We started out from Samarai on a squally, windy day, and made our way through China Straits out among the D'Entrecasteaux.

Very beautiful is the scenery in this remote corner of Papua—green, forest-clad mountains rising steeply



*Photo W. H. Hiltner*

SAMARAI



from the stormy edge of the sea ; blue vaporous peaks, four to seven thousand feet in height, soaring away into heaven beyond. There are many islands, too, each exquisite enough to make the beauty of miles of coast-line, were it set by itself. But the wind and the rain, and the ceaseless squalls, through which the ship plunged and squattered in her own violent way, veiled most of these beauties in driving folds of mist. The wreck was sighted late in the day—a decent little schooner, lying comfortably on a reef in a sheltered bay, within a cable's length of land. We tried to tow her off, but she sank in deep water, and her latter state seemed worse than her first. The ship could not stay to make any more attempts at rescue, but it was arranged that the unlucky schooner was to be refloated—with cocoanuts !—by men sent out from Samarai, and we went on our way again. Did anyone, outside of Papua the Peculiar, ever hear of filling the hold of a vessel with unhusked cocoanuts, and so floating her to the surface ? Yet this has been done before in the Possession, and seems to be one of the recognised methods of salvage.

The Woodlarks were our next port of call. They are a fairly important group, consisting of one large island, 35 miles by 7, and several islets of small area. Gold was discovered here many years ago ; and ever since there has been a fair-sized mining population, scraping out a living somehow or other in various parts of the big island. The death-rate among the miners in the early days was appalling. As was the case on the

notorious Mambaré River some years later, the prospectors of Woodlark came ill-provided with money and stores, ignorant of medicines, reckless about chills and fever, and they paid the penalty. The place is no sanatorium at best ; under the conditions of the early gold rush it became a death-trap from which few escaped. Health conditions are much improved nowadays ; but Woodlark has certainly given its full contribution to the bad name that has handicapped this unlucky dog of a Papua for so many years.

Woodlark has an evil reputation as an incurably rainy place, and it fully lived up to its bad name during the three days of our stay. The low, dark green shores were swathed in wet mist when we came to anchor in the bay, and squall after squall of fierce rain swept over the ship, each promising by its very violence to bring about a "clear up," and each hopelessly failing. We went ashore in a steady downpour, which hid everything of the scenery save a glimpse of a long dark creek running inland, a canyon between veritable cliffs of gloomy forest, and stumbled upon a wet clay track to the Customs Collector's house. Papua is a place well worth incurring any hardship or any inconvenience to see, but there are times—yes, there certainly are—when one asks oneself what one is doing in a country that obliges the luckless traveller to live the most of his time afoot on slippery tracks as steep as a roof, in a temperature like that of a Turkish bath, with rainstorms, mud, mosquitoes, scrub itch, and ants as an almost invariable accompani-

ment of the day's march. Why, or how one finds pleasure in starting forth every morning in clean, cool clothes, and coming back every evening a mass of heat-sodden dirt, and only fit to go into the bath at once—why one submits tamely to an absence of mails, news, new clothes, fresh food, amusements, everything that makes life pleasant to live, in other countries—and all to see a few savage cannibals in their native homes, to visit a few gold mines, pearl fisheries, plantations . . .

There is no answer to questions like these—only the old illogical reply that such things are, because they are. It may be that the savage ancestor calls, and must be heard. It may be that the over-flavoured, over-complicated life of cities creates an irresistible thirst for simpler food. At all events, countries like Papua beckon, and catch, and hold as do no others in the world—reason or no reason.

The three-mile walk to the Kulumadau fields is one of the most beautiful pieces of scenery in Papua, even in the midst of a downpour—but it does not look healthy. The track runs across low, inky, gluey swamps, tangled over with poisonously rich and heavy greenery. Huge tropical trees, with heavy leaves, tower into the black sky, and shut off half the dim light spared by the rain. Dead logs lie across dark stagnant pools ; weird fungi like the ghosts of pale lilies star the rotting limbs of fallen trees. There are orchids by the thousands in these forest swamps, clinging to the immense branches that

curtain the heavy sky—many of them rare and valuable, but all hard to distinguish from one another, in this season when flowers are comparatively few. The track is not of the worst ; one can take an occasional look round as one walks, whereas on most Papuan paths the scenery must go unnoted if the traveller is to keep his feet.

Kulumadau is a desolate-looking spot enough. The mills are not working to-day, and the ramshackle buildings, rough tram rails, and raw heaps of "tailings" are depressing in aspect under the gloomy sky, without the life of passing workmen and the throbbing of engines to enliven the place, as no doubt they do when the mines are "going." This field, we learn, has been twelve years open, and the best of the gold has long since been taken out of it. It has not been worked for some time, but the two rival companies which owned the gold-bearing district have lately amalgamated, and the field, which is now known as the Kulumadau and Woodlark Proprietary, is expected to do rather better.

A hundred and twenty acres are owned by the company. It is not certain that the whole of the gold-bearing reef is included in this claim ; indeed, an Australian miner of much experience lately gave it as his opinion that the reef might run right across the island. According to the same authority, there is sure to be more in the uncleared timber. Prospects on Woodlark, however, either here or at the alluvial fields, are not good enough to warrant anyone in

England leaving his own country to seek his fortune there.

Eighty thousand tons of tailings, the relics of earlier workings, are lying close to the mills waiting for treatment by the cyanide process, which is expected to produce a fair return of gold. A good quantity of concentrates have been sent down to New South Wales, with satisfactory results. The reef at the time of my visit was being worked at a depth of 470 feet, and producing from five pennyweights to an ounce per ton.

At Busai, several miles further inland, the workings are almost entirely alluvial. Here again the best days are over, but there is something still to be had. The field is rather restricted, not covering more than about one square mile. There are less than twenty white men on it, and most of the field is owned by three of them. These three employ 100 of the 150 boys working on the field. No one, it seems, can make much on Busai unless he can afford to employ a fair number of boys, as it is only the cheap Papuan labour that makes the field payable at all. Each boy can obtain about half a pennyweight a day, the gold running half a grain to the dish. In the early days a great deal of rough gold was found in the coral, under the thin surface of soil, but this has been almost all worked out. One man was reported to be doing well out of a claim of dyke formation, 20 feet wide, composed of quartz, gossan, and ironstone, and producing three to ten pennyweights per



ton. This was the only claim of its kind at Busai, the rest being all surface. No prospecting at all had been done of late, although it was thought very possible that more gold might remain to be discovered in the bush.

The health of the goldfields is good, and fever now almost unknown.

The current rate of wages for native boys is 10s. per month. Their food—rice and tinned beef—costs 8s. There seems to be little or no trouble with the labour, the boys being tractable and industrious, and capable of really responsible work, such as feeding batteries, etc. The natives are well treated, and seem to enjoy good health.

All this is told me by the manager of the Kulumadau mine. I do not understand most of it, and it does not interest me in the least. Our Australian tourist passenger, on the contrary, drinks in every item of information he can get, and talks and listens with sparkling eyes. I am wet and dirty and bored; I want to yawn very badly, and when the manager takes a lump of dirty grey slag out of the office safe and shows it to me triumphantly, saying that that is gold, almost pure, I feel like crying. If this is a gold mine, give me the mouth of a Cardiff coal-shaft for real interest by preference.

I do not go on to Busai, and am sorry afterwards, as one always is sorry when one has shirked a "sight," and it is too late to repent. I go back to the beach and take the *Merrie England's* whaleboat up

the river looking for alligators. I do not know why I am looking for them ; neither myself nor any one of the "boys" has a gun, and the "boy" who says he comes from the parts where they catch and drag alligators out of rivers by their tails does not seem at all anxious to sight a wicked fishy eye or a black scaly paw among the mangrove roots, in spite of his boasting. We glide in whispers up and down the creeks ; it is intensely still and dim and green and deathly. The trees have long mossy beards, hanging down straight as plumb-lines. The knitted and tangled liana ropes drop loose above the river with never a sway or quiver. The mangroves and palms and sword-leaved pandanus are mirrored without a flaw in the dead, still, tea-green water. One feels as if one were living in a stereoscopic photograph roughly coloured with a wash of green paint. The boys and I have had enough of it before very long, and head back for the ship again. As we cross the great open lagoon, outside a thin black streak bars the yellow reflections of the watery sunset half a mile away. It is an alligator, at last—hopelessly out of reach. . . . Just like them !

A few days later saw the *Merrie England* dropping anchor off the strangest, wildest, weirdest, and most remote of the many wonderful places that we visited during that unique voyage—Rossel Island.

I find it hard to say anything about Rossel Island, because the place is such a tissue of improbabilities and impossibilities—such a monument of the wonder-

ful and bizarre—that one cannot entertain even a faint hope of having one's tale believed down in the quiet countries where things run along the lines of the probable and ordinary. But the attempt must be made, for no one could visit Rossel and refrain from telling what he had seen.

It is the easternmost and most isolated of the Louisiade group, eighteen miles in length, six in breadth, and extremely precipitous in outline. Its mountains run to nearly 4000 feet in height. Mount Rossel, the tallest, a gloomy overhanging peak, wreathed in mysterious veils of cloud, looms high above the dark inlet in the southern side, where at long and irregular intervals ships come to anchor. Round about the intensely clear, intensely green deep waters of the bay, the lesser hills stand shouldering one another right down to the precipice edges that overhang the sea. Dark forest cloaks the heights ; white cockatoos, small as butterflies against the towering walls of the mountain, flit and scream through the fiery yellow green of the sunset, that fills all the hollows of the bay with weird goblin lights and shades as we slowly steam up to our anchorage, and let the long chains roar home. A wicked-looking place. A place solitary, remote, un-human beyond the power of pen to describe—a place, in brief, that only Papua could produce.

A former governor, calling at Rossel in 1891, described the natives as “the mildest, quietest, and most inoffensive in the Possession,” and characterised

the anecdote (well known to all Papua) about the eating of 326 shipwrecked Chinamen in 1858, as incredible. The official no doubt meant well, but his stay was extremely short, and he had no means of finding out the real state of affairs on the island, as there was not then, nor for long after, any white man in the place who could give information, and the Rossel language is known to none outside the islanders themselves—for the best of reasons, as I shall later show. We had the advantage of a three days' stay, occupied by a grand hunt for five murderers (whom the Governor, Judge Murray, wished to bring to justice) and by a good deal of general investigation. In this last we were much helped by the information given by two Australian traders who have lived for five years alone on Rossel—a feat never attempted before their coming, and one which has been near costing them their lives many times. These young men are well educated, know something of folk-lore and ethnology, and have taken pains to find out everything possible about the customs of the people among whom they live—in which they differ exceedingly from the average trader. They have done much, in a quiet way, to make the island safer both to whites and natives than it has ever been before (which is not saying a great deal, however), and, in the absence of all missions, have certainly exerted a restraining and humanising influence in a place that wants it as badly as ever did any place on the earth.

For the Rossel Islanders are not by any means mild and harmless. The mistake was a pardonable one, due no doubt to the fact that this people seldom carries arms of any kind, while the dangerous western tribes go armed to the teeth with spears, bow and arrows, stone axes, or European-made tomahawks. The Rossel Islanders are small and not formidable in appearance, though their expression is ugly, even villainous. They carry no offensive weapons as a rule, and they do not look as if they could harm anyone, even if they would.

And yet these quiet little men are among the most expert, practised, and determined murderers in the whole world.

They murder a man or woman at the death of every chief. They used until very lately to murder one man or woman for every other who died—in consequence of which the population of the island is very small. They murder anyone who is unpopular, anyone who gives information to Government authorities, anyone who breaks a taboo. If a man steals, and they do not wish to inflict the extreme penalty on himself, they murder the woman who cooks his food. They have tried to murder the two traders more than once, but now, realising that these men are the sole source of their tobacco supply, they never threaten violence. But nevertheless murder is one of their chief occupations.

How is it done? In one way only. The Rossel Islanders are the most expert smotherers ever heard

of in fact or fiction. They do not carry weapons, because they do not want them. All they need to do when they mark down a victim is to signal to their associates, and in an instant seven or eight of them have crowded round the doomed man, and in utter silence, if need be, are squeezing out his life. One holds his mouth and nose, others seize his limbs, and when they have got him down another kneels and jumps upon his chest. It is over in a minute—there is little struggle, no bloodshed, no noise, but the work is done.

If a Rossel Islander wants a pigeon for supper he has no need of bow or spear. He waits till dusk, and then steals out to a tree where a row of sleepy pigeons or parrots are dozing on a branch. Noiselessly as a cat he climbs the tree, and far more noiselessly than any beast seizes and smothers one bird after the other, without even disturbing the rest, until he has as many as he wants. He will even paddle out to a rock in mid-ocean and smother the sea-birds roosting on it before they wake. . . . Truly, a man of strange accomplishments.

When the "mild and gentle" Rossel Islander does not wish to kill or eat his victim at once, but merely desires to secure him, he and his satellites bend the wretch's limbs one after another back over a log or a large stone, breaking all his arm and leg bones, so that he cannot escape. There is a good deal of cannibalism still in the island, though not so much as there was four or five years ago, when the men

employed by the trader to cut copra for him used sometimes to come to work smelling hideously of decayed human flesh after a feast held the night before. Sinister indeed, at the death of a chief, are the looks cast by the relatives and mourners at one another, before the victim of the funeral feast is fixed on. No one knows who will be sacrificed, and the savages wander about eyeing one another suspiciously and nervously for hours. There is not one of them who has not many a time choked the life out of warm, palpitating flesh, and eaten of that very flesh after ; but bold as they are when banded together like wolves, they are, like wolves, cowards alone, and afraid of the pack. . . . By and by it is noticed that the glances of the crowd fall oftener on a certain man or woman than any other. The creature thus singled out sees it, and makes frantic efforts to divert attention to someone else, well knowing what will follow. He may succeed, or he may not—probably not, for every man is so anxious for himself that the first sign of general consent is hailed as a deliverance by all but the victim. The wretched creature turns to run, and the pack are on him in an instant. Not to catch him, however—there would be little sport in that—but to hunt him, and run him down by degrees. They will even give him a start, let him away, and perhaps not attempt to catch him for a day or so, until they are fairly ready, and then the whole tribe joins in, each man spurred on by the deadly fear that the fickle crowd may turn and fix on

himself, and there is hunting over hill and gully, across river and over crocodile-haunted swamp, hour after hour, until at last the quarry is run down, and the deadly circle of the smotherers, of which he has so often made a part, closes round himself at last, once and for all.

The story of the Chinamen, according to the islanders themselves, is not fiction, but truth. They are fond of relating it as one of the great deeds of their ancestors, and fairly glory in the tale. In 1858, a shipload of Chinamen was being taken down to Australia. The vessel was wrecked upon a reef close to Rossel Island. The officers escaped in boats, but were never afterwards heard of. As for the Chinamen, numbering 326, the natives captured them, and put them on a small barren island, where they had no food, and no means of getting away. They kept their prisoners supplied with food from the mainland, and every now and then carried a few of them away to eat, until all but one old man had been devoured. This last succeeded eventually in getting away, and told something of the story, which seems to have met with general disbelief. True it is, however, on the evidence of the sons of those who did the deed.

Moreover, the natives of the surrounding islands say that during the years following the shipwreck, the Rossel Islanders were fond of bringing Chinamen about in their boats, hawking them like pigs among the cannibals of other places, and that quite a large number were sold in this way. Adele Island, at



present uninhabited, was the prison of the unlucky Celestials, whose fate was surely hard enough to draw a sigh of pity even from Australians of to-day, little cause as they have to like the race.

For years after this wreck—indeed, until quite recent times—the Rossel Islanders had a large quantity of coin in their possession, both gold and silver, which they were willing to barter with stray traders for a stick or two of tobacco, at any time. There is a persistent tradition that the safe of the ship, which the islanders never succeeded in opening, is still hidden somewhere in the bush, but no one has ever seen it.

The murder which the *Merrie England* had called to investigate was not quite of the usual kind. It would be impossible, in the present state of Rossel, to inflict punishment on the natives for every act of violence among themselves, and, if it were possible, it would be undesirable. But in this case a boy had been killed for venturing to come down and inform the trader of a double smothering up in the mountains, when a chief and his wife were slain, on account of some local quarrel. In consequence, the island was in a state of unrest, threatening to throw off the mild influence of the two white men, and breathing possibilities of more sinister things, when the big steamer that they were afraid of should have gone.

Now, it is not good that a native should be killed because he has appealed for protection and help to a white man. Moreover, a little check to the mur-

derous instincts of the natural Papuan is to be commended, when possible. So the village constable (there are two on the island, Papuans both), with a force of twenty volunteers, set out to try and capture the offenders. The island is a big one, a mass of steep hills, deep gullies, and dense bush. The murderers had many friends, and the time available for capture was very short. In spite of all these disadvantages, the natural hunting instinct of the Rossel Islander triumphed, and in two days the five men who were "wanted" had been brought down to the coast under an escort by this time increased to forty. The islanders had no scruples whatever about joining in the hunt or giving over their countrymen to justice. Anything that involved the chasing of a man was good enough for them. They would have liked to smother and eat the prisoners, certainly, instead of tamely giving them up to the Government, but there was consolation for this loss in the trade goods given to them as payment for their two days' work. Decked out in new red calicoes, with tobacco in their pouches, and beads round their necks, they went their way back to the mountains, wishing, no doubt, that a Government man-hunt might come their way every day, yet nevertheless resolved not to take part in one as the quarry, if they could reasonably avoid it. The murderers were ironed, and removed to the ship, previous to trial at Samarai. They will probably, if convicted, suffer a term of imprisonment lasting some years, and will be employed during that time on road-

making or clearing work. Apart from the useful lesson conveyed by the loss of liberty they will benefit considerably by the healthy life and regular food, and will, no doubt, return to Rossel at least partially civilised.

During the two days' wait the ship party amused themselves visiting some of the bush villages, although the weather—windy, stormy, and wet—was rather a serious drawback. On one morning, after a long row across a wide, beautiful bay, overhung with tall green peaks, the Governor, myself, and three or four others, landed upon a narrow strip of beach, with a dense, wet, tangled mass of tropical forest rising up almost out of the water, and started for one of the Rossel villages, two or three hundred feet above. We were only accompanied by our boat boys, but it was not considered that we ran any danger, as this murderous little people are not fond of open attack.

The pathway was, as usual, a mere streak of slippery clay embedded in the bush, blocked everywhere by fallen logs and crossing streams, and infested by ants. It wound upwards so sharply as to try the wind of the party a little, at the pace set to the native guides by the energetic Governor. On the top of the hill it opened suddenly out into a little space covered by houses—three or four, no more—and overlooking the sea and the approaches on each side, after a fashion that suggested a desire to avoid surprise visits.

They had certainly succeeded in avoiding ours. The village was all but deserted. Only a couple of

men who had been in contact with white people often enough to know that no harm was probably meant them, stood their ground, and waited to see what could be obtained in the way of tobacco from the new-comers.

And here we came upon the second of the incredibilities of Rossel. The smothering tales had been the first. Now we were to find—as we found elsewhere on the coasts, and as we should have found even in the hidden villages of the almost unknown interior—that the natives nearly all spoke English!

To be addressed in reasonably good English of the “pidgin” variety, by hideous savages who made murder a profession, and had never come into actual contact with civilisation, is an experience perplexing enough to make the observer wonder if he is awake. Yet that is what happens on Rossel Island. English is the “lingua franca” of the place, filling up the gaps—and they are many—in the hideous snapping, barking dialect that passes for speech along the coast, and making communication possible among the tribes of the interior, who vary so much in language that many of them cannot understand each other. How did this come about? I fancy, through the unsatisfactory nature of the Rossel dialects. Any that we heard were scarcely like human speech in sound, and were evidently very poor and restricted in expression. Noises like sneezes, snarls, and the preliminary stages of choking—impossible to reproduce on paper—represented the names of villages, people, and things.

Of verbs we could find no trace, though they may exist. Most of the words are monosyllabic, and nearly all are spoken from far back in the throat. A good deal of information was given us by a young person enjoying the name "Tnmagh" (pronounced in one syllable), who spoke more English than the others. Tnmagh had been away in a recruiting ship, and knew something of the mind of the white man. Some boys, he told us, had learned English in the same way as himself, and when they returned to Rossel they taught it to the rest. The Rossel folk, who are not deficient in brains, whatever one may say as to their morals, recognised at once that here was a means of communicating with each other simply, easily, and clearly (for there is no tongue in the world than can be learned so rapidly as "pidgin English"), and acquired the new language from each other so quickly that there is now scarce a village where you cannot find one or two English-speaking natives.

Shock number three came when we began to examine the houses. They were neat little structures enough, made of plaited palm and thatch, set up on tall stilts after the usual Papuan fashion, to avoid nocturnal visits from alligators, and closed from wind and rain with palm-leaf doors. Most had a little front verandah, so deep as to form a sort of porch. Within, nothing of interest was found except some plaited baskets, and a number of ebony lime sticks with carved handles, looking exactly like ornamental paper knives. These lime sticks have flat

blades, and are used for mixing and spooning out the lime chewed with betel nut. The heads of the sticks are generally carved into grotesque semblances of human faces, and sometimes into rough likenesses of pigeons or parrots. A stick or two of tobacco readily purchases any one of them.

But it was not the lime sticks so much as the general surroundings of the houses that puzzled and amused. These professional murderers, with the tongues of brutes and the morals of sharks, are very fond of gardening, and plant pretty red, yellow, and pink flowers about their houses with considerable effect. They keep pet cats, which are sleek and well-fed looking. "You ki-ki (eat) that fellow pussy?" we asked. "No! no ki-ki pussy—he good fellow," was the astounding answer. Not content with landscape gardening, studying foreign languages, wood carving, and keeping pets, they display further evidences of a taste for the "gentle life" by going constantly provided with fine toilet sponges, which they procure themselves from the reef, carry round their waist in bags, and use to wash their faces!

After this, one was prepared for anything, and it was only mildly astonishing to stumble across a dead insect in the pathway exactly like a black crayfish, some eight inches long, and to hear that this gruesome creature—one of the stick insect family—was common in the trees, and was boiled and eaten by the natives as food. Like a crayfish, it turns red when cooked.

Nor were we much amazed, lower down, in a very wretched, dirty, ill-built village on the coast, to discover a native drill, made of stick, string, and shell, with extreme ingenuity, and capable of boring holes in stone. The inventor—who must be a Stephenson or an Edison among Rossel Islanders—was quite ready to accept a stick of tobacco, value three-halfpence, for his really wonderful achievement; but its purchaser, in a fit of generosity, insisted on giving him six times what he asked.

At the foot of the hill we found another of the surprises of Rossel—a mint, no less. This island is especially rich in the shell from which the native money of Papua is manufactured—a bivalve two or three inches across with a rim of rich deep red inside the lip, and a layer of the same colour underneath the white lining or the shell itself. Papuan money consists of certain small button-shaped objects, bored through the middle, cut out of this red part of the shell, and commonly worn or carried in long strings. The natives value it more than anything else that can be offered to them, and many of the white traders use it in preference to European money for purchasing copra or pearlshell, or even pearls. Each disc is worth about threepence, and a man can cut out, shape, and finish something like a dozen in a day. The trader resident on Rossel has instituted a mint on a small scale, where he employs the natives making money for him, when he has no other work for his indentured boys. It is only a shed, where

the shells are cut up, shaped, and bored, but it is certainly interesting as another of Rossel's curiosities.

On board the ship in the evening someone asked the native policeman what the numerals in Rossel dialect were. He gave them readily enough, but hesitated at the number seven. You might not always say that number, he explained—sometimes it brought on thunderstorms if you did. And you must never say it at all when you went to Adele Island to get cocoanuts or fish, because the most frightful results would undoubtedly follow. In any case, when a Rossel Islander went over to Adele he used a different language all the time he was on that island.

Why? Were there natives on Adele who spoke differently?

Oh, no, it was uninhabited; but you must talk a different language there—it was the custom.

This, of course, is an interesting instance of a language surviving the people who once used it. There were no doubt formerly natives on Adele who spoke a tongue different from those of Rossel, and the Rossel fishing parties still keep up its use through a blind tradition. . . . There are traces among the islanders, too, of a separate language used by men only, and forbidden to the women on pain of death. . . . Why does not some man of science come up to the Louisiades and investigate the many mysteries of Rossel? It would certainly be found a mine of strange and valuable ethnological discovery.



I do not expect that anyone will believe me when I say that in the neighbourhood of Rossel, and further west, both I and other members of the party saw fish about two or three feet long, which run along the top of the water for a considerable distance on the tips of their tails—but it is nevertheless true. Why they do it—unless possibly to escape from enemies down below ; and more especially how they do it—I could not undertake to say. It is not the leap of a flying fish, for it does not clear the water. The fish simply speeds along through the air, keeping the flukes of its tail only under the surface. It does not appear to turn, which the flying fish does. It is common about the Louisiades, on shallow shores, where seaweed grows thickly just under water. If any zoologist can explain this fish I hope he will—obvious explanation of the profane vulgar need not be advanced, as the *Merrie England* is a temperance ship, so far as her passengers are concerned.

From Rossel we went on to Tagula, or Sud-Est, where more strange experiences were awaiting us.

## CHAPTER VIII

Sud-Est and its Queen—Historic jewels of Papua—Two brave Mrs. Crusoes—A new voyage of Maeldune—Unchaperoned Sim-Sim—The Island of Silence—Too good to be true—The curious Trobriands—Catching fish with kites—A ghastly locket—The gentle art of poisoning—Strange fruits—The pearls in the dust heap—Back to Port Moresby.

AFTER leaving the incredible island of Rossel we turned back in the direction of civilisation again, and ran to Sud-Est, another of the Louisiades, distant a few hours' steaming. A long, dark blue mountainous coast stretched out before us as the *Merrie England* picked her way cautiously among the many coral reefs surrounding the shore. Sud-Est is more than forty miles in length, and as unlike to the gloomy, evil island of Rossel as day to night. Grassy, rolling downs slope above the sea as one approaches; a coral jetty runs out into the bay; there are houses and sheds on the hill above. A cheerful, homelike place, this Sud-Est, and it is what it appears to be.

The island is nominally, no doubt, owned and governed by the Commonwealth, but morally it is the property of the Queen of Sud-Est, and of no one else. Mrs. Mahony, the adventurous Australian who bears this title, has been on the island, with an occasional holiday, for twenty years. She came up

from Queensland with the first of the Papuan gold-rushes, when there was only one other white woman—a missionary's wife—in the whole of the Possession. She lived through the exciting and perilous days of those early times, always respected and deferred to by the roughest of the miners, from her innate force of character, and when the fields of Sud-Est became almost exhausted, and the whites went away, she still remained with her husband and children, and administered justice and order to the natives with a strong hand. In consequence the island presents a picture of industry, peace, and safety that is little short of amazing, considering the fact that it lies far out of the range of ordinary Government influence, and has never been touched by missionary effort. The large native population is, almost to a man, gold-mining. Where the white man has given up, the Papuan still finds enough to make gold-washing a profitable profession. The popular idea that the "nigger" is necessarily a lazy creature unless forced to work by whites finds little justification on Sud-Est. This island, indeed, furnished some of the most instructive sidelights on Papuan character that I met with in all my journeyings about the Possession.

If the Papuan has sufficient motive he will work, and not only for short periods, but steadily and continuously for years.

When he makes a little money he spends it very wisely, all things considered. Contact with white people, knowledge of the English tongue, and of the

habit of steady work, with its attendant advantages of constant food supply and useful exercise, all tend to make the Papuan healthy, decent, and peaceful.

These are the lessons of Sud-Est, where, owing to peculiar circumstances, the effects of generations of training have been compressed into a single quarter of a century.

As to proofs, they are plentiful. The natives of Sud-Est live, and have lived since the departure of the miners, almost altogether by gold-washing. They are industrious, and work hard. Almost every man has his own scales, and weighs out his gold to the minuest grain, carefully and accurately, before he takes it to the store to purchase food or tobacco or tools. There are about a thousand natives on the island altogether. During the days of the gold rush there were over six hundred white miners, and Sud-Est was not by a long way so healthy as it is to-day. There is still malaria, but it is not of the worst kind, and both whites and natives now seem to enjoy good health.

Crime is almost unknown on Sud-Est, though there is no settled system of government other than a very rare visit from a magistrate. The lives of the half-dozen white residents are as safe as they would be in Sydney. The Sud-Est boys are in considerable request as labourers when they can be induced to engage, and many of them have a fair amount of property in goods and native jewellery, such as armshells and shell money.

English is spoken all over Sud-Est. The early miners were probably the first to introduce the British tongue, which was so obviously superior to the cumbrous local language that it immediately took root and flourished ; but the most important influence in that direction has undoubtedly been the rule of the "Queen." Mrs. Mahony's system of teaching English to the natives has been marked from the first by the double merits of simplicity and effectiveness. Her store and enclosure were, and are, the general rendez-vous of all the natives, for business, shopping, or even amusement, as when the "Queen" gives a royal feast to three or four hundred of her subjects, simply to promote harmony and goodwill. It is easy to understand that no Sud-Estian would like to lose the right of entry to this enchanted ground, and therein lies the strength of Mrs. Mahony's educational method. For whenever a single word of Sud-Est is spoken within the limits of her enclosure, no matter why, or by whom, the "Queen" issues forth in all the majesty of her six feet of height, and promptly runs the offender out. If you cannot or will not talk English inside the royal grounds you have to hold your tongue on Sud-Est. In consequence, the island language is rather less spoken than the foreign tongue to-day, and the natives are practically all bilingual.

There is not much loss in this, except to philologists searching for something unique in the way of languages. The tongue of Sud-Est is to the full

as awkward, inexpressive, and inharmonious as that of Rossel, though in a different way. Where the Rossel man speaks in monosyllabic grunts and gasps, the Sud-Estian talks in words of amazing length linked together by endless repetitions. The name of a village near the coast was given to us by the English-speaking village constable as "Vanamanamandawa." "Finger" was "namandagugyie"; "head," "mbalunda"; and the simple sentence "give me a lock of your hair," translated by the constable, expanded itself into "Waw ma mwunu umbaludawuluwuluye"—the last and most amazing word representing "hair." As a member of our party remarked, it would save time to take it without asking.

Mrs. Mahony was absent at the time of our call, much to the regret of the party; but we were hospitably entertained in her house, and shown many local curios. Shell money is among the most interesting of these. Mrs. Mahony is one of the largest purchasers of the Rossel shells from which the money is made, as already described. Native armlets also, carved out of a single large white shell, thick and firm as a slab of marble, bring an amazing price among the natives, and are profitable to trade in. A native will often engage in plantation or carrier work on the mainland for two years, in order to have the money to purchase a pair of these ornaments, which are kept by almost all traders, though they are of purely native manufacture. A fairly good pair will cost three or four pounds, and the

prices range upward from this comparatively modest sum, to the twenty and thirty pounds sometimes given by a sort of native syndicate, for a pair of really famous bracelets, known to half the Possession, and named, as all the celebrated shell armlets are. The love of these ornaments amounts to a passion with the Papuan, and can be compared to nothing but the American woman's fancy for big and historical diamonds. As our own famous gems are named "The Koh-i-Noor," "The Sancy," "The Pitt," "The Cullinan," so the Papuan shell armlets of unusual size and thickness have their native names, known to everyone, and bringing celebrity and distinction to the possessor of the jewel wherever he goes throughout the whole extent of Papua.

Some of these facts were given me later on by a well-known trader in another part of the Possession, but as Sud-Est is one of the chief markets of native jewellery, I have mentioned them here.

Misima, or St. Aignan, was the next call. We had, again, only a few hours to run, as the islands of the Louisiade group are fairly close together. Starting at daybreak, we found ourselves by breakfast time anchored surprisingly close to a brilliant coral shore, backed with stately, plummy cocoanut palms, and almost covered with close serried rows of the most wonderful canoes that I have yet seen, even in this country of curious boat-building. They were fully forty feet long, and some were deep enough to conceal a man standing upright within. Most were

partly decked with platforms of woven cane, and all were built up in several sections, commencing with a deep keel cut out of one huge tree trunk, and spreading out above to a considerable width. They fronted the burning sea proudly, with their high carved prows, like the beaked war-vessels of the ancient Norsemen; their gunwales were gay with chains and inlayings of dazzling shells; and the paintings in red and white and black, of crocodiles, parrots, pigs, fish, and men, that adorned the bows and stern, and ran along the sides in bands, were a wonder to see.

We tried to purchase some of the detachable ornaments, made of carved and painted wood, that were stuck in various prominent parts of the canoes; but their owners, a rather ugly and stupid-looking set of natives, refused to trade in anything that we could offer. So the party divided and went inland, some to shoot parrots and pigeons, some (and those not among the wise ones) to follow the Lieutenant-Governor on one of his visits of inspection and investigation. As His Excellency usually set a pace of anything from four and a half to five and a half miles an hour (a gait rather trying in hot, wet jungle, and over rough hill tracks, in a latitude only six degrees south of the line), his division was not popular on the line of march, and often enough consisted of himself and one agitated native servant, trotting in front, and extremely anxious to uphold the honour of his service and his race, without in consequence missing the track or getting badly



“winded.” In the second division, as a rule, followed the rest of the *Merrie England* party, taking life easily, and wondering audibly what our gigantic chief was made of.

In this instance, two separate sections got left, lost, and finally united. Parrot-shooting—and such parrots! green, yellow, red, pink, blue, purple, and black, all combined on the one bird—passed a pleasant hour or two; exploring trips up abandoned gold workings filled in the balance of the morning. St. Aignan, like Sud-Est, has been worked out, and only provides the slenderest living for the seven or eight white men who still cling to the island.

There were three white women not long ago, but there is only one now. Thereupon depends a story—one of the strange, true, unbelievable stories of Papua, which he who likes may credit.

A white woman lived here on Misima, far away from the remotest echoes of civilisation, for many years, with her husband, who was one of the early miners. He died, and she kept on his claim, though she was now very old, and worked it herself. After some years of this strange, lonely life, the old lady became ill, and had to go down to Queensland to see a doctor. While there, regaining her health, she made up her mind to endure her solitary life no longer, but to bring back with her to Misima a companion who would share her labours and profits, and lighten the dullness of existence on that uttermost isle. She chose, not a second husband, not a young



WINNIE CAVOIS

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woman, but another white-haired old lady of her own age, one who had been left ill off, and feared a life of dependence. In the quiet home lands, an old lady who has lived her life and become conservative and stiff in mind and body looks for an almshouse or "institution" to end her days in, if she is ill provided with means of support, or at most seeks a position as chaperon or caretaker or companion. They do things differently in Queensland. The ancient dame selected by the heroine of Sud-Est answered gallantly to the call, and the two old women actually set out for the wilds of Papua together, travelling by steamer to Samarai, and thence, some days in a risky little cutter, to Misima. Arrived there, they went on working the first old woman's claim, and lived decently on what they made, asking help from no one, self-respecting, industrious, and independent.

I should have liked well to meet these two plucky old Australians, and had been looking forward to my visit to Misima for that reason. But it was not to be. Only a week or two before the two good comrades had died, mostly of old age and infirmity, it was thought, and within a few hours of each other. They rest where they laboured, on Misima, far away in the Ultima Thule of outermost Papua, brave women of a brave race, who owed naught to anyone, in life or death.

We were bound for the Trobriands now, calling here and there on the way. The track lay among many islands, all beautiful, and most of them interest-

ing. Time did not permit the yacht to stop, as a rule, but there were strange stories to be heard about some of these out-of-the-way little spots.

The Bosanquet group—a mere handful of small islets and sand-cays—was passed one afternoon near sundown. Our captain ran the ship close by Sim-Sim, the chief island of the group, in order to let us have a good look at it. Sim-Sim is worth looking at, for it has worked out for itself what is surely the **most extraordinary** social system ever heard of, even in Papua the Impossible.

It consists of twin islands, not more than a few acres in extent, separated from each other by a wide strait of deep water. In the centre of the larger island rises an extinct volcanic crater, with great forest trees, and slopes of green grass appearing inside the cup. This is much the prettier island of the two; its palms are taller and thicker, its beach wider, its grassy slopes richer than those of the sister islet, which is, nevertheless, a picturesque place enough.

. . . Did the reader, in the days when Plancus was consul, and summer nights were full of the scent of roses, and the rustle of tulle and silken skirts, and the swinging “one—two—three” of “White Heather,” or “Estudiantina”—when rustic seats in moonlit gardens beckoned insistently, and curtained bow-windows were magnetically attractive, and *the* place to see the race of the day somehow always seemed to be the back of the grand stand—did he or she, in those pleasant, miserable days, ever wish hope-

lessly—as one wishes for a million of money, or for heaven—for an island somewhere in the South Seas upon which the heavy foot of the chaperon should never have been set, and over whose flowery shores the baleful light of her inescapable spectacles never should have shone? Well, here it is, here in the Pacific Ocean, off the coast of Papua, in the Bosanquet group, and its name is Sim-Sim.

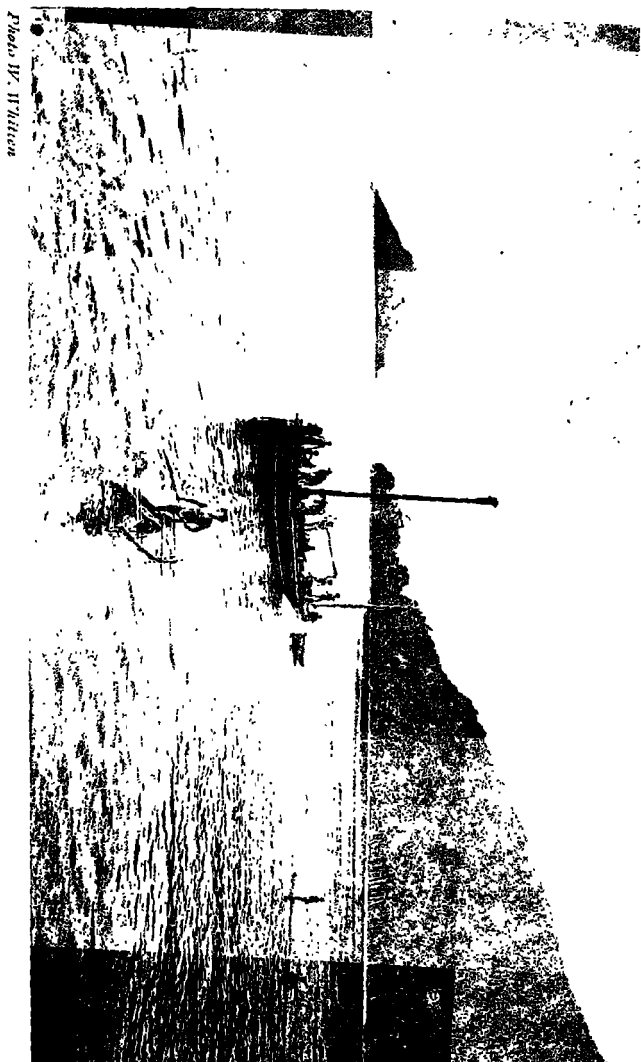
They understand the art of gathering the roses while they may in Sim-Sim. On the pretty island the big, flowery, palmy island, with the extinct crater-cup in its centre, lives the youth of Sim-Sim. On the other, the decent, rather prosaic, rather inferior island, live the old people. They are well treated, but kept in their place, and not allowed to spoil sport. The young people do not want them, have no use for them, and let them see it. They, the young ones, can amuse each other; the time will come soon enough when they will have to cross the strait and leave the volcano island, with its green romantic dells and long white beaches, for the middle-aged place that is not half so pretty—but in the meantime they pluck the fruit of the flying hour, and find the world is good.

The captain tells us that if you land on Sim-Sim you are instantly surrounded by a cloud of sea-birds and cockatoos, which light on your hands and head, scream in your face, and generally make themselves very much at home with the visitor. These are the island pets and watch-dogs. The natives tame them, partly for amusement, partly to provide an incor-

ruptible guard for the islands at night. Cockatoos sleep with one ear and one eye open, and have the useful habit of making night hideous with blood-curdling yells if strangers are heard approaching.

We were all sorry we could not call at Sim-Sim, but you have to be careful about where you find yourself when dark comes down off these half-surveyed Papuan coasts. So we kept on our way, and got out of the tangle of reefs and islets and cays while there was still light enough to tell a coral "horse-head" from a floating mass of seaweed.

It was really the Voyage of Maeldune, or something very much like it. "We came to the Island of Silence" next day—a far-out bit of the Bonvouloir group, where nobody lives, or ever has lived. There were three islands fairly near to one another, real "desert islands," without even a name to a single one of them. The first was a high island, standing up some hundreds of feet out of the calm blue sea. It was sheer cliff all round—snowy-white coral cliff, garlanded with long green vines dropping down to the water's edge. On the top there were trees and bushes, and a tangle of lianas and trailers of many kinds. One might have got up, with the help of the creepers and the projecting spurs of coral, but it would have been a risky business at best, and all the *Merrie England's* passengers declared (after the captain had thrown certain sailorly obstacles in the way of a call) that they did not want to land there—which was untrue.



*Photo W. W. Hutton*

# AMONG THE ISLANDS

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The two other unnamed islands now came in sight, two vivid bouquets of foliage set in the midst of a grass-green lagoon, and fenced round from the blue deep sea beyond, by the ruffle of the foamy coral-reef. Here we absolutely demanded that the *Merrie England* should be stopped and a boat sent ashore. One of the guests from Australia wanted a desert island, and he had fallen in love with the Isles of Silence at first sight.

So we rowed through the opening in the reef, across the lagoon (which was pale pea-green in colour, with heliotrope reflections), over two or three many-coloured water gardens of growing coral, with striped and painted fish darting through, and up to a beach the colour and consistence of fine white table-salt. Here we landed, and instantly began to overrun the place. We were aggrieved—though I do not know why—to find one or two ruined palm-leaf huts on the shore, and we were somewhat consoled when somebody told us that the huts were doubtless mere shelters for natives who might camp on the island during the long canoe voyage from the Bonvouloirs to the Trobriands.

The island proved to be much bigger than it looked from the sea. Two lots of the visitors got lost in its woods and did not disentangle themselves for an hour or more. There were open spaces of green grass and pink flowers shut in by tall forest trees; there were dense dark recesses with scarce a ray of light, and swampy ferny places where the tracks of

wild pigs were plain, and sparse-growing brakes where the sun shone through, and the white columns of the coco-palms shot freely skyward, and the sparkle of the cool, salt, tumbling sea flickered low among the leaves, a long way away. There were sites that simply cried out for a house, and creeks and coves that looked painfully empty without a boat. There was a beach where you could take a long jump off the sand into eight feet of liquid beryl. There was . . .

"I shall have this place," said the visitor from Australia, determinedly. "It's got tons and tons of copra already, and I'll plant more. I'll keep a cutter to run to Samarai in a couple of days when I want. I'll bring my brother out, and we'll build a house and be kings of the place. One couldn't wish it better if it had been made to order—it's almost too good."

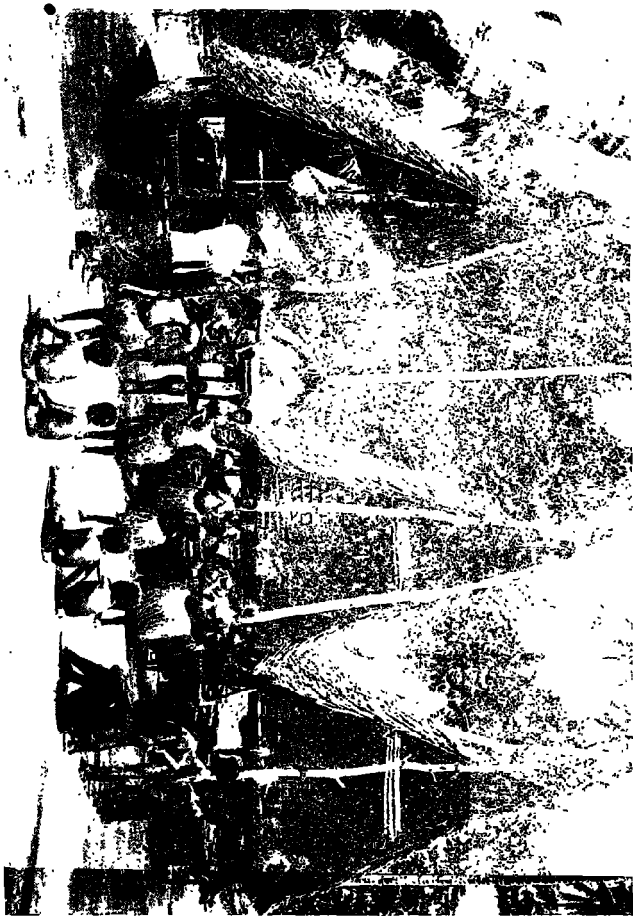
Alas, it was quite too good! for when we got back to Samarai, we found that among the latest applications for land received by the Government was one from a schooner captain applying for the two little islands in the lagoon. And so the Australian's vision faded.

The Trobriands lay before us after this—one big and several little islands about a couple of hundred miles distant from Samarai. The Trobriands are always supposed to be one of the most interesting places in Papua; they are certainly among the most civilised. If I did not find them as fascinating as the wild and wicked West, that was probably because they reminded me too much of the South Sea island

*Photo 11, 11/11/11.*

TROUBRIAND VILLAGE

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life with which I was so familiar, and therefore lacked the charm of novelty.

The people of the Trobriands are of the Polynesian type rather than the Papuan. Their hair is less woolly than that of the mainland tribes ; they are ruled by chiefs who exercise authority over large districts, and they are not, and never have been, cannibal. In Papua proper, the "chief" idea is almost non-existent, unimportant village headmen being the nearest approach to it that one is likely to meet. But there is a real aristocracy in the Trobriands which counts generations of descent, and is physically better developed than the commonalty.

The Trobriand native is fairly good-looking, and much given to ornamenting himself with pearl and other shells, dog's teeth, shell beads, and money, and chains of coloured seeds. The men are almost altogether unclothed ; the women wear the grass petticoat. Trobriand houses are beautifully and elaborately built, set on high piles, with ornamented roofs and gables, and they often contain curios worth getting, for the Trobriander is something of an artist, and carves human and animal figures in wood with considerable skill.

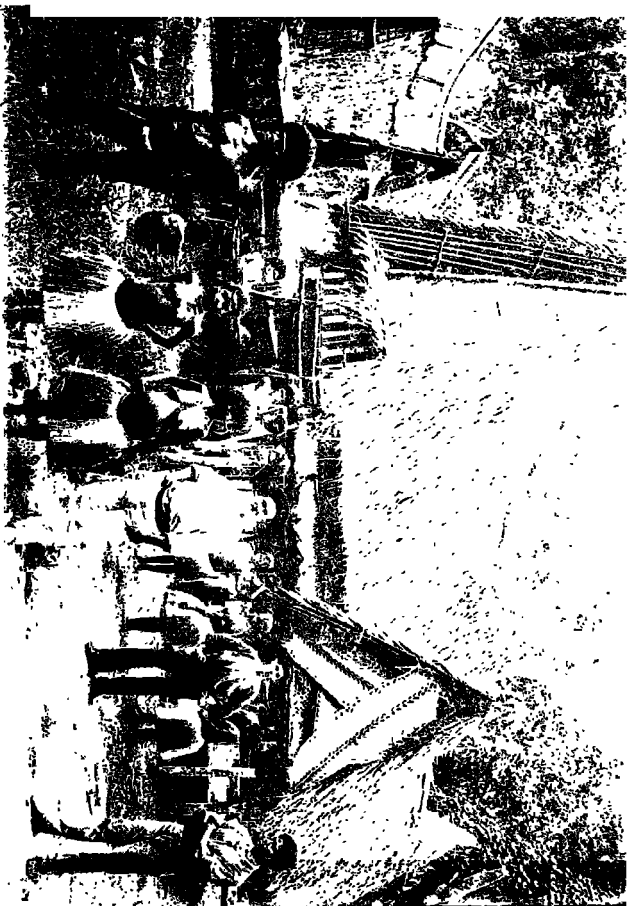
The totem idea is strong in these islands. Each tribe has its guardian beast, fish, or bird, which is regarded as sacred, and never eaten by any member of the clan. Pigeons, parrots, and fish-hawks are among the best known of the totems. One notices paintings of birds and fish on the outside of the houses, which

have doubtless some connection with the ruling totems.

A long walk through Kitava, the biggest island, was practically all I saw of this interesting group. The distance was under eleven miles, but, with halts and delays of one kind and another, our party took nearly all day to do it.

It began with a scramble up a nightmare staircase some 300 feet high, partly natural and partly artificial, composed of the coral foundation of the island in its rise from the sea. Walking on coral of any kind is very like walking on a pavement of petrified Turkey sponges, every point as hard or sharp as a steel pen. In this instance, the difficulty was added to by the piled-up blocks of the "staircase," which obliged one to lift one's feet waist-high at every step, after the manner of tourists climbing the pyramids of Cheops.

Arrived at the top, there were the usual sloping muddy tracks, leading from village to village; yam gardens, immense in extent and beautifully kept and fenced; natives here and there, not at all scared (since white people have often visited the Trobriands), but very eager to do a good bit of bargaining if it came to curio buying; the quaint, elegantly built little towns; the staring, crowding women, half-timid, half-curious; the rattle of small naked boys, determined to follow our party from end to end of the island, if necessary—all the familiar scenes of island life as I had known it in the South Sea world.



*Photo W. W. Witten.*

# TROBRIAND ISLANDERS

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There were novelties, however. The fishing kites that they eagerly offered for sale were not like anything in "*the islands*"; nor does one, in the South Seas, see a disconsolate parent going about with the jawbone of his deceased child hung like a locket round his neck—a common practice in Kitava. Nor yet, in all the South Sea world, shall you have enormous red-back spiders, as big as small birds and as poisonous as snakes, offered you—alive—as valuable and desirable curiosities.

The kites were really wonderful. They were made of dried banana leaves stretched on twigs, and attached to neat coils of fine native-made twine. At the other end of the twine was an object somewhat resembling a tennis racquet, strung across with a mass of yellow, strong, silky net, which is obtained by twirling the frame round and round in one of the great bush-spider's webs. This frame is left to trail loose in the water, while the kite is flown above the sea. Small fish come after it and strike their teeth into the web, which entangles them and holds them long enough for the watching Trobriander to haul in his line and secure the booty before it gets away. A long thick tassel of twisted spiders' webs is sometimes trailed in the water instead of the frame, with the same result.

There are native fruits in the Trobriands unlike those that one sees elsewhere. One that we sampled during the day was like a very large apple, firm and cool, with a taste suggestive of lemons and

fresh butter. Another—also somewhat like an apple—was white-fleshed and juicy, but of a peculiar and deadly sweetness that cloyed the palate hopelessly after a couple of mouthfuls. Short of saccharine itself, one could scarcely find a parallel for the amazing sweetness of this island fruit.

We had tea at the Resident Magistrate's bungalow, and heard his opinion of the Trobriands and their people generally. The population is diminishing here, though on the mainland things are going the other way. There is much disease among the people, and they are hard to treat. Missionary work has been carried on in the islands for some years, and is meeting with fair success.

The Trobriand people, though not cannibals, are rather of a murderous tendency among themselves, and much too fond of avenging insults or injuries by poison. Their clever and ingenious turn of mind finds much enjoyment in the study of dangerous plants and their effects. From the sea also they obtain certain very dangerous poisons. One, taken from the gall-bladder of a fish, is so deadly, that a banana pierced with a thorn which has been dipped in the poison will kill the man who eats it within a very few hours. They can also poison cocoa-nuts without opening them visibly, so that the unsuspecting enemy may drink and die. . . . If one lived in the Trobriand group one would certainly wish to be on good terms with its inhabitants.

There was no time to see any of the pearling. The

*Merrie England* had made an extended trip, and the officials travelling on her were anxious to get back to Port-Moresby. In any case, it is not very easy to see the pearl fishing. The three or four whites who have each taken out a pearler's licence (£50 per annum) are scattered here, there, and everywhere in their boats, buying pearls from the natives; and if you ask them what they are getting or making—why, for the most part, you *may* ask.

All the same, truth leaks out; and most people in the Territory know that very good pearls go down now and then from the Trobriands to the dealers of Thursday Island. A good many are brought in independently by the natives, who use the pearl-oyster as food, and are keen nowadays to appreciate the value of the little round things that, for some odd reason, the white men want very badly, and will buy for tins and tins of meat, and pounds and pounds of tobacco—if you are wise, and stick out for your price.

Let Bond Street weep when it hears that for uncounted generations—until a very few years ago, in fact—the Trobriand Islander used to eat the oysters and spit out the pearls on the ground under the house, in the rubbish-heap, anywhere. There are certain “kitchen middens” of old standing in these islands that must be richer in pearls than any twenty jewellers' shops—useless pearls, alas! for the gem does not stand ill-usage and exposure to weather and decay, especially in a hot and rainy climate.

And now, with bowsprit pointed south and west again, we made steam for the towns, and the plantations, and the waking-up, developing, new New Guinea once more. We had done with the wilds; the wandering voyage was over.

Yet it is true that the half has not been told.

## APPENDIX

### HOW TO REACH PAPUA

**I**NTENDING travellers or settlers may be glad of a little information as to the means of reaching Papua, and the expenses of the journey.

Contrary to received opinion, Papua is not very "out-of-the-way." One can do nearly the whole distance in the best and biggest of the "P. and O." liners, embarking at Tilbury, and leaving the boat six weeks later in Sydney. From this point, the regular vessels of the Australian United Steam Navigation Company, sailing weekly, take the traveller up the Queensland coast to Cooktown in ten days—a beautiful and interesting voyage, with many ports of call. At Cooktown the Burns Philp steamers meet the A.U.S.N. boat, and, crossing Torres Straits, reach Port Moresby in two days.

An alternative route from Sydney is that via the Solomon Islands, in a Burns Philp through steamer, going to Samarai and Port Moresby without change. This takes three weeks, and allows the traveller to see one of the most interesting and beautiful groups of islands in the world, quite at leisure, as a number of calls are made.

Occasional boats of Dutch and German lines sail to Port Moresby or Samarai from Sydney, usually calling at Brisbane. They cannot be counted on, however,

as the service is irregular, and depends on the amount of cargo obtainable.

The expenses of the journey vary, according to the line selected. By "P. and O." it costs £41 to £82 as far as Sydney; the ticket to Port Moresby adds on another £12.

Travellers who do not mind a good deal of "roughing it" and some mixed company can get to Sydney for about £20 by the large one-class White Star boats that sail from Southampton. Messrs. Cook and Sons, Ludgate Circus, London, E.C., are always ready to give information about any line.

The "P. and O." Steam Navigation Company, Leadenhall Street, E.C., can furnish handbooks and literature descriptive of Papua, if asked. The Australian Commonwealth Government Offices at Victoria Street, Westminster, will also give pamphlets and information to applicants.

Outfits for Papua should be of the simplest kind. White duck or drill suits of "patrol" pattern, strong light khaki clothing, flannel shirts, heavy nailed boots, woollen puttees, are the principal requisites. Colonial felt hats are more commonly worn than helmets, as sunstroke is very rare. Ordinary requirements for men—such as hats, ties, shirts—can be obtained in Papua when necessary, as there are one or two stores of a simple kind. Camping outfits, mosquito nets, tinware, tinned foods, can also be bought in Port Moresby and Samarai.

Riding gear is not of much use, as horses can only be used about Port Moresby and the Astrolabe. A steam or oil launch is invaluable to any traveller who can afford to bring one up from Sydney or Brisbane.

Steam is to be preferred for work up the rivers and along the coasts, as the distances are great and currents variable, and a launch may very easily run short of fuel—in which case the steam launch, which can at a pinch be worked with wood, will have a distinct advantage over the oil launch, in spite of the superior compactness and convenience of the latter.

It is possible to ascend the rivers in native canoes or boats, though progress is necessarily slow and uncertain, owing to the great volume and strong current of the rivers.

The best season for visiting Papua is the time of the south-east trades, which usually lasts from about April to October. July and August are commonly the coolest months. During the north-west monsoon, from November to March, the weather is hot and rainy, and winds are irregular. An exception, however, must be made as regards visits to the Western and Gulf divisions. These are most easily reached in December, January, and February. At other times the river bars are often quite impassable, owing to the surf.

Exploring expeditions into the interior should by no means be undertaken "lightly or inadvisedly." There is no country in the world that makes a greater tax upon the pluck, determination, strength, and organising power of explorers than Papua; nor can the unknown interior be reached without considerable expenditure. Hundreds are not much use when it comes to serious exploring; unless the traveller's pocket will stand a call of at least four figures, he had better not try to tempt the fascinating unknown. It must also be added that exploration in Papua is



surrounded by restrictions that do not obtain in Africa. If a Papuan explorer were to hang his men for misconduct, he would run a fair chance of being hanged himself when he came back. If he ill-treated, starved, and oppressed his "boys"; if he armed one tribe against another, and conducted private wars; if he shot natives who had not attempted to harm him, and set on fire villages deserted by their terrified inhabitants—as African explorers have done time and again, not only without remorse, but actually glorying in their deeds—he would very probably be tried and imprisoned on his return. The name of science is respected in this far-away colony, and explorers or prospectors are always warmly welcomed and given every possible help; but the price of blood that has been paid for so much of modern discovery on the African continent will never be paid in Papua, even if the locked doors remain locked for another half-century.

The possibility of exploration under humane conditions was proved by the Mackay-Little exploring journey in 1908-9, already referred to. During six months' journeying through unknown, hostile country, only one carrier out of nearly eighty was lost, all the others returning in good condition to their homes; and no natives of the country travelled through were killed.

For information about Papua, whether from the settler's, traveller's, explorer's, or investor's point of view, application can always be made to the Government officials—Lieutenant-Governor, Government Secretary, or Director of Agriculture at Port Moresby.

## HEALTH CONDITIONS

Concerning the health conditions of the country, the opinion of Dr. R. Fleming Jones, the Government Medical Officer at Samarai, carries special weight, as Dr. Jones, besides his residence of five years in Papua, can claim experience and study of tropical diseases in Cuba, the West Indies, the Southern United States, and the Philippines.

"Papua is singularly free from tropical diseases, considering its geographical position, and on the whole is certainly healthier than India," said this authority to the writer. "There is no cholera, no plague, and enteric is unknown. There is no yellow fever, no Malta fever, no sleeping sickness. Malaria and occasional outbreaks of dysentery are really the only tropical diseases of importance, and there is no disease which yields so readily to proper treatment as malaria, or that can be guarded against so successfully, if people will only take the trouble. The worst of it is that generally they will not. Whenever I hear of a new plantation being opened up, I confidently expect that the white people engaged thereon will go down with fever, one after another. They will come into Samarai sick and debilitated and complain of the country, not of their own carelessness. The Anopheles, which is the malaria-bearing mosquito, bites after sunset as a general rule, and if a man intelligently uses a good net—in the absence of a mosquito-proof room, which, however, ought to be one of the first things provided for him—and searches this with a light before he turns in, he will

probably escape fever. The mosquito net should always be used, even with a mosquito-proof room, as an additional precaution.

“Papua has certainly suffered by confusion, in the public mind, with the Guinea coast of Africa,—quite unjustly, as the health conditions are infinitely better in Papua. The truth really is that this country is as healthy as any other lying in the same latitudes. Tropical and equatorial countries are not as healthy for white people as temperate climates—everyone knows that; but with the application of the most elementary rules of tropical sanitation, with which every new-comer to a tropical country should be familiar, there is no reason why settlers should not enjoy good health here. With regard to the question of stimulants, blackwater fever is undoubtedly in many cases connected with their abuse, though certainly not caused by drinking. The most important matter in the prevention of blackwater fever is simply the prevention of malaria, as it is almost always in individuals who have had repeated attacks of malaria that blackwater occurs. I believe that a strictly moderate use of stimulants does no harm, even good in some cases, but moderation, in enervating climates like this, seems to be so difficult that it is safer to counsel total abstinence”

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